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THE DARKNESS

Books by Evan John

NOVELS

**CRIPPLED SPLENDOUR
KING'S MASQUE
THE NETWORK
RIDE HOME TOMORROW
THE DARKNESS**

GENERAL

**KING CHARLES I
ANSWER TO HITLER
LOFOTEN LEFTER
TIME IN THE EAST
TIMETABLE FOR VICTORY
ATLANTIC IMPACT 1861
TIME AFTER EARTHQUAKE**

PLAYS

**KING-AT-ARMS
TWO KINGDOMS**

THE DARKNESS

by

EVAN JOHN

‘And the Light shines in darkness
and the Darkness did not understand it.’



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PREFACE

THREE of the documents included in this book were written and published during the First Century A.D. They have since been republished in various different translations.

Everything else in the book appears in print for the first time.

I

SECURITY REPORT. UNSIGNED. DATED A.D. IV. KAL. MAI. COSS. TIB. SEL., OR (AS WE SHOULD SAY) SATURDAY, APRIL THE 28TH, A.D. 31.

City & District of Jerusalem. Case No. X.

YESTERDAY's execution has had the desired effect. Tonight's reports show that the city and district are already settling down into a state of tranquillity unusual at the Passover season.

The adherents of the person convicted appear to have been successfully intimidated. His twelve closest associates (after showing the expected cowardice at the moment of his midnight arrest) have now gone into hiding, or possibly left the district altogether. Their present whereabouts is unknown, but regarded as unimportant. Investigations proceed.

An unconfirmed report states that two undesirables have been identified in or near the village of EMMAUS, S. of the JOPPA highway: further details are awaited. Close watch is still being maintained on the village of BETHANY (Eastern Sector), recently a rendez-vous for subversive activities, but there is no sign of such activities being renewed.

Agents who have successfully penetrated into the secrets of the organisation are now reporting that the surviving ringleaders will, in all probability, make their way back, separately, to their normal domiciles in the Northern region (Tetrarchy of GALILÆA). Some are believed to have started on this journey, presumably in disguise, and may already have crossed the border bounding Your Excellency's Province of JUDÆA.

It is humbly suggested that Your Excellency could assist our work by issuing orders to military personnel for closer supervision of all roads leading northward.

In accordance with Your Excellency's recent instructions, the probable movement of malcontents has been intimated in general terms (but without detailed reports) to His Highness the Tetrarch HEROD of GALILÆA, who appears to be prolonging the customary visit paid to JERUSALEM for the Passover celebrations.

Our agents point out that the above-mentioned ringleaders may well be obliged to hasten their journey home owing to lack of money. They are all reported as persons of slender means (fishermen, petty tax-collectors, and the like), who appear to have been unemployed and living on charity for a considerable time. This charity is now likely to be withdrawn, and overcrowding has raised the cost of food and lodging in the city to an abnormally high level (see separate Report on PRICES, RISE DURING PASSOVER). The movement has never had any substantial financial backing, and an unconfirmed report states that the person formerly acting as treasurer for the meagre funds of its inner ring left his associates, and went into hiding, shortly before the arrest of the principal leader—presumably taking those funds with him.

Reports on the successful outcome of the execution, and its salutary effect upon public opinion, have been almost unanimous. The only contradictory estimate emanates from a source already regarded as extremely unreliable.

The sudden liquidation of the undeniably dangerous situation which obtained up to the time of the arrest is widely attributed to the timely isolation of the principal malcontent, and to the rigorous measures taken by Your Excellency to ensure prompt sentence and speedy execution.

In JEWISH TEMPLE circles there has been much favourable comment. There has also been appreciation of Your Excel-

lency's gracious gesture in permitting accusers and witnesses to remain in the paved colonnade outside the ROMAN Judgment Hall, and so avoid ceremonial unfitness for the Jewish Passover.

The single ill-effect of the proceedings is of negligible importance. A case of Robbery with Violence, reported from the eastern outskirts of the district (SHEMESH-JERICO highway), is almost certainly attributable to a resumption of activities by the previously-convicted criminal, BARABBAS, whom Your Excellency graciously released in deference to popular clamour. It should not be difficult to effect a second arrest, to be followed, this time, by summary execution.

Rumours and wine-shop gossip.

Little to report.

As soon as Your Excellency's decision made it clear that the Government was taking a firm line, all natives of good character and reliable opinion began to speak with approval of the new situation created. No dissentient voices have been overheard, except in a few unimportant quarters already suspected of seditious tendencies. Soon after the execution, public interest appears to have been easily diverted to less objectionable topics, such as the possibilities of war on the eastern frontier of SYRIA, and the present prospects of the olive-harvest in this district.

There have been a few clumsy attempts to make anti-Government capital out of the partial solar eclipse and the minor earthquake-tremors which unfortunately coincided with the final hour of the execution, and even to quote these as indications of divine disapproval. Our rumour-agents were promptly instructed to counteract this inconvenience by discussing the whole matter, in streets, markets and wine-shops, as one of purely natural phenomena, without religious or political significance. They were slightly hampered by

the public pronouncements of a certain Greek, professing to teach Astronomy at his domicile in the BEZETHA suburb, 'who has apparently calculated that a solar eclipse is impossible at the season of Passover, or of any other full moon. Steps are now being taken to discredit his miscalculations on the ground of his alien origin.

Counter-rumours, etc.

It is respectfully suggested that much good might be done by the circulation of a report that Her Excellency, the Lady PROCULA CLAUDIA, left JERUSALEM for the country some days ago, and was therefore absent at the time of the above-mentioned trial and execution. This might prove the most effective means of combating certain embarrassing rumours, no doubt baseless, whereby Her Excellency is represented as having taken an interest in the person condemned, and even as having endeavoured, while under the influence of some dream or fantasy, to interrupt the course of justice.

It is also suggested that no good purpose is served by public discussion of the initial arrest as having been effected by guards from the JEWISH TEMPLE, nor of the trial being preceded by a hasty (and apparently irregular) examination before the JEWISH SANHEDRIN. Now that Your Excellency's action has secured general approval, it would seem unnecessary, and contrary to Imperial policy, to allow any credit in the matter to native institutions. All can readily be attributed to the promptitude and effectiveness of ROMAN justice.

There is no need to minimise Your Excellency's courtesy in temporarily transferring the prisoner (on grounds of his northern origin) to the jurisdiction of His Highness HEROD, Tetrarch of GALILÆA. His Highness has few and unimportant supporters among the natives of this city and district, and none of these are likely to succeed in representing Your

Excellency's cleverly-calculated action in any manner likely to foster illusions about the relative importance of native and ROMAN justice. Were they to attempt such misrepresentation, they would be easily silenced by reminders that His Highness felt obliged, after a brief interview with the prisoner, to send him back to the ROMAN Judgment Hall. No further action in this matter seems to be necessary.

Comment on the above report.

Seen and approved.

Pontius Pilatus, Procurator.

A.D. iii. Kal. Mai.

N.B.

I. *In Re* Roman or Jewish initiative for arrest, Examination by Sanhedrin, etc. No action. The Sanhedrin has its own machinery for circulating and counteracting rumours (as appeared during Trial). Its retaliatory measures might prove embarrassing.

II. *In Re* the Lady Procula . . . NO action.

P.P.

II

MILITARY ORDER. DATED A.D. III. KAL. MAI. COSS.
TIB. SEI.

IN view of the improved situation in the JERUSALEM district, Cohort IV (Legio X Pretensis) will hold itself in readiness for immediate departure to DAMASCUS and for incorpora-

tion in the army permanently stationed in the Province of SYRIA.

The Cohort will march at dawn a.d. vi. Non. Mai.

The Cohort will proceed via SEBASTE (SAMARIA) to CÆSAREA PALÆSTINA, where the Eagle will be re-issued to the Centurion-Standard-bearer and displayed for the subsequent march, TIBERIAS—CÆSAREA PHILIPPI—DAMASCUS.

During the march to TIBERIAS, the Cohort will be under the command of M. MUTIUS TREBONIUS, Military Tribune, who will then be proceeding on furlough. Northward from TIBERIAS, the march will be directed by the Centurion-in-Charge, who will report at DAMASCUS to His Excellency P. SLPICIUS QUIRINUS, His Imperial Majesty's Proconsul for SYRIA.

On arrival at TIBERIAS, the Tribune TREBONIUS, before proceeding on furlough, will despatch to this Headquarters a report on the present situation in GALILÆA, with details of any signs of disaffection noted on the march. All ranks will assist the Tribune by supplying relevant information.

The report will be based solely on observation by ROMAN personnel. No reference will be made to information supplied through local officials or other natives appointed by His Highness HEROD, Tetrarch of GALILÆA.

The Centurion-in-Charge will supply this Headquarters, forthwith, with details of the pack-animals required for the march and the method of requisitionment. No wheeled transport will be requisitioned.

Pontius Pilatus,
Procurator for
Judæa.

III

CIRCULARISED MESSAGE. UNSIGNED.
UNADDRESSED. DATED NISAN 16 (3791).

Bonds of Comfort.

He said: It is expedient for you that I go away.

He said: The Son of Man must be lifted up.

He said: The prince of this world is judged.

Likewise: Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

IV

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED. FROM 'THE INN
CALLED THE THREE PIGEONS, JOPPA IN JUDÆA'.

*Lucius Septicius Claudius Felix to his friend Caius Maccius
Spintho Philhellenicus, Greetings.*

GREETINGS, my dear rival in Rhetoric & partner in Poetry, from this unlikeliest of places. I have been through some pretty unpleasant towns in the course of my travels, but I doubt if the whole Empire contains an unhealthier or more inconvenient port than this Joppa from which I write.

I shall not try to describe to you its climate, its bad water, or the squalor of its streets. Perverse as you are, you might just call up your slaves, order them to pack for a journey, and take the next ship out here. I know your absurd tastes for what all sensible people try to avoid. I suppose your father had you called Phil-Hellenicus, Greek-lover, in the hope

of whetting your appetite for irregular verbs at school: it should have been Philo-Peregrinus, Fond-of-Anything-Abroad. If I told you more about Joppa, I'd only be tempting you to come out and die of some disgusting Oriental disease. And, believe me, you'd die disappointed. This is one of the sky-blue distances which look greyest when you get there.

I've got here, and got stuck here, by listening to bad advice. I was told that Joppa was the nearest harbour for picking up a ship to take me home to Italy. It isn't even a harbour. The skippers have to anchor a long way off-shore, for fear of shallows and sand-banks, and the poor would-be passenger has to hire a local row-boat, at some exorbitant price, to bucket out to sea and bargain with them for transport.

I've made no bargain yet. I sit waiting my chance, and writing letters, because there is positively nothing to do in Joppa except write letters. If I'm here much longer, I shall find myself doing what I don't like doing, writing a long one to my Aunt Claudia—of whom more anon. I may find a ship to take letters that isn't fit to take me: I'm still squeamish, in spite of much travel in the East. Otherwise I'll bring this in my baggage and send it off from Naples or Ostia (if I ever see either!) to prepare you for the shock of seeing me turn up again a day or two later. I shall need the day or two's rest before I'm presentable.

If it's Naples, I shall be in sight of good company, won't I? From what I can gather out here, His Divine Majesty Tiberius Cæsar seems to have taken root in Capræa. Or do you ever see him in Rome these days?

I started to write an ode to him when I was in Egypt. It seemed to me more-than-Virgilian, mainly because I'd had too much to drink. Next day I was sober and tore it up.

By the way, however much you may smile at the Divinity-business in Rome, the provincials out here take it quite seriously, and I can quite understand why. The Imperial hermit of Capræa sends them out respectable Governors to

keep order, and they haven't forgotten the old days of the ramshackle Republic when they spent their whole time wondering when they were going to get their throats cut or (what seems to worry the Oriental more) their precious money filched from them. Hence altars and incense—and my abortive ode.

I didn't mean to get on to politics. I'm really writing to warn you of a disappointment in store for you, poetical rather than political.

When I was in Egypt, in the intervals of bargaining for next year's papyrus-crop, I kept your commission in mind. I looked for what you wanted, and didn't find it. I never really expected to. You should have believed what any sophist in Rome could have told you, that there is no 'native literature', as you call it, east of the Isles of Greece.

I bought quite a long manuscript for you, from an old rogue of an Egyptian priest. I had it translated when I was held up in Alexandria. It turned out to be very dreary speculations about the after-life of some unimportant Pharaoh, after he'd finished governing the misbegotten monkeys of Egypt and been stuffed into his pyramid. I may not be much of a poet myself, but I know the stink of really bad poetry when it comes my way. I'm bringing the stuff back to you, for what it's worth. Also the bill—nearly twenty pounds, including translation fees.

I had a disappointment of my own in Alexandria. I was kept hanging about there for some weeks and, towards the end, I got a man with a big reputation there to start painting my portrait. I suppose he is so accustomed to depicting the local touts and sharpers that he made me look like all the rest of his customers. Also I was growing a beard at the time, which was no help. I left the thing behind in his shop, unfinished and, luckily, unpaid-for.

I made a second attempt for you, here in Judæa. No better success, but no outlay. I'd better tell you about it. There's nothing else to do.

I had another commission here, from my Aunt Claudia. I was under orders to go and visit her daughter Procula. I can't remember if you know about her. They married her off (against her will, I always maintain) to that rather unappetising creature, Pontius Pilate. Pilate was lucky enough, or clever enough, to have some connections with Sejanus at Rome, and that meant he could pull strings at Capræa. He came out here, five years ago, as His Imperial Majesty's Procurator for Judæa, and my dear aunt has not seen her dear daughter since. I travel under orders to bring back a full report on how my cousin is behaving, how (as I'd prefer to put it) she is coping with the task of being wife to Procurator Pilate.

Their Residency is at a place on the coast called Cæsarea Palæstina, where some Greek or Jew threw blocks of granite out into the sea and made the only proper harbour between Egypt and Tyre. (I ought to have gone back there, instead of to this Joppa place). When I arrived, three weeks ago, I found they had gone up-country to the big hill-station at Jerusalem. Apparently that's what the Procurator has to do two or three times a year. The Jews swarm up to Jerusalem for their religious festivals, and that means murder, riot and possibly rebellion unless there's a Roman Governor on the spot, with the right quantity of Roman troops. Pilate, who is getting elderly, apt to repeat himself and his jokes, keeps on saying, "But why need they have any religion, let alone one that needs seven cohorts to prevent it becoming a rebellion?" I had one crack back at him. The festival in question, called Passover, is supposed to celebrate some ancient occasion when the Jews came up out of Egypt. I told him I had just been trying to do business in Egypt myself, and I had every sympathy with those who celebrated their release from it, however rowdily.

As you gather, I followed up to Jerusalem and spent a not unhappy fortnight with the not very happy pair. I had, by the way, shaved off the incipient beard before going to stay

with Procula. They were lodged in the local *Prætorium*, and you can guess what that is like from its military name. Just a four-square barracks with battlemented walls, a tower at each corner, and a central courtyard for drilling the recruits. Procurator's quarters at the western end, over the Judgment Hall. No wonder I wrote no odes there, you'll say! But it would be no bad lodging for a satirical poet. From the battlements one looks over a vast mass of humanity and its doings, acres of the Temple courts where hundreds of thousands of Jews come to sing, pray, preach, squabble, sell doves, cheat each other with bad coin at the money-changers' tables, or cut each other's throats in the riots which Pilate's soldiers have to run out and suppress.

It's all wonderfully *alive*. I couldn't help liking Jerusalem far better than I expected. It's not so very different from one of our own Italian hill-towns, up in the Apennines, only the air is even more invigorating. They say there's always a breeze up there, even in July and August, when I'll wager that this Joppa swelters and stinks.

I've said 'invigorating', and I might almost say 'intoxicating'. I've never felt so well and active, always wanting to be busy and to poke my nose into everyone else's business. That seems to be a common failing in Jerusalem!

I poked it, to please you, into the possibility of finding some Jewish poetry. I started with much better hopes than I'd had in Egypt. I was told that things had started, ages ago, with one of their old kings, actually the one that first captured Jerusalem for them, about the time the Greeks were capturing Troy. His name was David, and when he wasn't escalating cliffs or committing adultery with his own subjects, he seems to have been writing songs and lyrics. His son was said to have kept up the tradition, poetic as well as amorous, and I was given dozens of names for subsequent centuries. Names—but no poems. Foreigners are not invited to inspect the latter, nominally because they are too sacred. Such was the story, and such the excuse

given for putting me off my search. I persevered, and found there might be other reasons for concealment! "

It was rather like the story I learnt at school, about what happened to Pompey when he first brought the legions to this country. He had heard all kinds of things about the Jews and their gods—or rather God: they've never had the imagination to invent more than one. He insisted on going into the Jerusalem Temple of this somewhat unsociable Deity, right into the inner shrine which they call Holy of Holies. They didn't like it at all, but they took another look at the legions and did as they were told, unlocked the door for Pompey. Anyone else would have been wanting to bring away an idol, all gold and jewels, to show in his triumph at Rome, and then sell to the pawnbrokers for what it would fetch. The magnanimous and monumental Pompey merely wanted to take a dignified look and come away again. He went in, and found nothing to look at. A little empty room. An empty seat. No god sitting on it.

The place is still there, though it's been rebuilt a bit. Pilate wouldn't dare to ask for the key, unless he wanted a first-class rebellion within a couple of hours. I looked down on the outside of it from the Prætorium and thought of old Pompey inside, scratching his nose at the picture of nothing, where he'd expected to meet the Jewish god. I felt I'd had a rather similar experience when I went looking for Jewish poetry.

After some grumbling, Pilate had given me a letter and an order to a member of the 'Sanhedrin', the little tin-pot local Senate which we still allow to meet and talk about religion and other things that don't matter to us. ('Sanhedrin' is only the Greek 'Sunedrion', but they don't know how to spell Greek properly.) My Senator proved to be quite a pleasant old greybeard who talked good Greek. He had to scowl at me *pro forma*, because I was an unbeliever come to meddle with sacred scriptures, but after that he treated me with the best of courtesy. He lives in a small house, but a very clean

one, a long way from the Temple. He took me into his tiny little *scriptorium* where there was a desk elaborately inlaid with a rather mad pattern in ivory, and two dozen pigeon-holes for the scrolls above it. He took down one, gave me another scowl, kissed both ends of it, and then began to read it aloud.

I was not impressed. It is a guttural kind of language, and he had a nasal kind of voice. There was nothing that you or I would call metre. Pindar at his wildest, celebrating the winning chariot at one of those Greek race-meetings when there was too much Greek wine about, never wrote anything so completely formless. Needless to say, I hadn't a notion what the words meant.

I asked him for a translation of what he considered to be the best of the stuff. He gave me some more nose-work from a writer whom he called Isaias, and then began to put bits of it into Greek. It was about a Virgin, and then about a golden age, and the child that was going to be born to bring in peace and plenty for everyone. You can guess the rest. Isaias was just proving to be a third-rate plagiarist from our Virgil's *Eclogues*. And when we got to a bit about all weapons of war being hammered down for peaceful purposes, I sat repeating to myself the line from the first *Georgic*:

'And melt their pruning-hooks, to make a sword.'

I was polite, but I couldn't let the thefts pass without some kind of protest. This time I earned, not a scowl, but a smile of tolerant superiority. I was told, so please you, that this Isaias lived some six or seven hundred years *before* Virgil, in times when the Jews had never heard of Rome and her legions, but lay awake at night thinking about chariots from a place called Assyria. He may have, for all I know. But I'll wager that other Jews have been busy writing his poetry for him since. I wouldn't be surprised if some of it was written fifty years ago, in certain obscure quarters of Rome itself, before Sejanus had the Jews smoked out of it.

Well, we managed to part on good terms, and at least, as I told you, I hadn't parted with any of your money. Don't waste any more, or any more of your friends' time, sending them in search of what isn't there.

Not that I'd altogether wasted mine, sitting and watching the old fellow tapping out what he would call rhythm with his long fingers on the ivory inlay. Isaias obviously meant more to him than Virgil does to me, which is a great deal. I felt quite angry at the way Pilate grunted when I tried to tell him about it afterwards.

I hope I haven't bored you. I wish you were here now, to relieve the boredom of Joppa with one of your absurd lectures about learning lessons from those we conquer. I'm sure no one will ever convince you that none of them, except the Greeks, have anything to teach us about literature. I won't swear there aren't one or two lessons, of some other sort, that a man might learn in Jerusalem. But I'm cursed if I know how to put 'em into words.

I'm sure there's nothing to be learnt in Joppa, except how not to cook a meal, and how not to decorate streets—with garbage and dead cats. But it's time I faced what my lodging-house-keeper calls supper, and then faced the not-very-different smell of dead cat in another search for a ship to take me home. If I fail, I shall have to spend tomorrow writing to my aunt.

Farewell.

V

POLICE REPORT. DATED NISAN 16 (3791).

EARLY this morning, a dead body was discovered outside the southern walls of the city, between the Fountain Gate and the Dung Gate (HINNOM VALLEY area).

The body is that of a man in middle age, with reddish hair and beard. The cause of death appears to have been strangulation. Some rope was found near-by.

A purse found on the body was empty. There is no indication whether it was rifled before or after death.

The case was at first treated as an ordinary one of Murder for Robbery, and no action was contemplated. But information has now been lodged with us to the effect that the dead man was a certain Judas ben-Judas, a native of KERIOTH in s. JUDÆA. This person was recently reported as an associate of the Galilæans whose leader was executed last Friday. If the identification can be substantiated, the murder may possibly prove to have some small political significance.

Please enquire whether the Sanhedrin would like any further steps taken in the matter.

VI

PRIVATE LETTER. UNDATED. UNSIGNED. APPARENTLY FROM CLAUDIA PROCULA, WIFE TO THE PROCURATOR, PONTIUS PILATE, AND ADDRESSED TO LUCIUS SEPTICIUS CLAUDIUS FELIX AT JOPPA.

PLEASE reward the messenger who brings this, but ask him no questions. Make no attempt to reply.

I ask this for your safety, not mine. I believe you to be in danger. You are still in Judæa, of which my husband is Procurator. You are heading for Rome, where my husband has powerful friends.

Some dangers are better *faced* than fled. I must urge you to return to Jerusalem, while you can still do so of your own free will.

There is a Roman visiting Jerusalem, by name Cæcilius.

He is expert on matters of law, and of the rights of Roman citizens. Send ahead to him. Tell him that your right to come and go in this Province may soon be called in question. He too has friends in Rome.

It is not important that my husband has no grounds whatever for jealousy. It is important that he is Procurator. I believe him to have other grounds for ill-will. But all is guess-work at present. He has, I think, been having bad news from Rome.

I have been at Jerusalem since you left. Busybodies, apparently against my husband's orders, have been spreading the story that I left it to escape the disturbances of Passover. It is false.

We had disturbances, but they are now over—for the present. My husband has changed greatly during the last few days.

I was enabled, by means of a dream, to convey to him warning of a great danger in which he stood. He disregarded that warning. Do not you disregard this, which now I send. Farewell.

VII

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM THE PRÆTORIUM,
JERUSALEM, A.D. III. KAL. MAI.

*Pontius Pilate to his young friend Mutius Trebonius, Greetings
& God-speed.*

YOU will have had your marching-orders by now. I'm sure you're glad to be off, with three weeks' leave ahead of you. I'll wish you good hunting on Hermon. Also some pleasant evenings with Somebody in Cæsarea Philippi: I hope you find her company as ravishing as you seemed to anticipate,

when you told me about her after dinner last week! It's good to be young.

You need not take too much notice of what's said in the marching-orders about a report on Galilæa—'signs of disaffection' and all the rest of it. I had to put that in to please certain subordinates of mine in the Prætorium who are always in a state of panic about something or other, and feel happier when they think they have infected me with it. They've piped down lately. I'm now told that I—by their advice, of course!—stamped the danger right out by ordering one execution. I don't know how much they were exaggerating before, or how much they may be exaggerating now. I sometimes think one would be better informed without so many information agents, especially when one doesn't know how much they pass on, and how much they keep to themselves. But, for the moment, I have more important things to worry about.

I meant what I put in orders about keeping clear of local officials in Galilæa. I needn't tell you what sort of filthy gang Herod hires to run his Tetrarchy. I only wish he'd stay in it, and not come up to Jerusalem for Passover. I believe he does it mainly to embarrass me. You know what these local Rajahs are like! He has no more belief in Jehovah than he has in Jupiter. I wish I knew what creatures like him do believe in.

I've had a number of convenient quarrels with Herod during the past year or two, and kept him at arm's length. Now I've taken some bad advice and staged a reconciliation. All the bowing and scraping is beginning again, and I shall have to write and invite him to dine at the Prætorium. I don't know how long I shall have to go on being reconciled. It would be easier if he was farther away. You might help by putting something in your report about his loving subjects wanting him back in Galilæa. Everyone knows that half of them are longing to cut his throat, but it's wonderful what a man will believe if it's flattering.

If you have good sport round Hermon, I and Procula would be quite glad of a few bustards, or anything else to vary the Jerusalem menu. Use a Government pack-horse and an urgency courier, or things won't be fit to eat by the time they get here. I can square things up this end.

Talking of the execution, I've just turned over some of the evidence we didn't need to use, and noticed one item that is rather *ad rem*. 'The accused was heard to refer to His Highness the "Tetrarch Herod as "That fox".' You'll not be surprised to hear that I was half inclined to save the author of that piece of wisdom from the Cross. It was rather a pity I couldn't afford to, for other reasons.

I must finish. Good luck to you, in all your sports. I'm just writing home to Rome, but not to tell tales to your *fiancée*.

Farewell.

VIII

OFFICIAL LETTER. DATED AS VII ABOVE.

C. Pontius Pilatus, Procurator for the Province of Judæa, sends greetings and affection to his colleague in government, the Serene and Illustrious Prince Herod, Tetrarch of Galilæa.

I WRITE to record my gratitude to the gods, for the happy termination of certain recent misunderstandings, and for the resumption of our former cordial friendship. It is always a pleasure to me, when official duties demand my presence in Jerusalem, to learn that Your Highness is also paying a visit to the city. I trust that I shall not return to Cæsarea Palæstina before we have had opportunities for more intimate personal contact, and for profitable discussion of the many problems

of government in which co-operation between ourselves is so desirable.

May I ask Your Highness to appoint a day, as early as may be, when Your Highness can grace my dinner table at the Jerusalem Prætorium with your ever-welcome presence?

Your Highness will already have had official notification about the outcome of the petty case which, by good chance, happily put an end to the recent friction (if I may so call it) between Your Highness's headquarters and my own. The prisoner whom I submitted to Your Highness's jurisdiction—on the ground that he was normally resident in the Tetrarchy of Galilæa—and whom Your Highness graciously re-submitted to my tribunal with such admirable promptitude was clearly shown to be a danger to public tranquillity. I was therefore obliged to pass a summary sentence of death by crucifixion, which was executed during the early and middle hours of last Friday—care being taken, on my express orders, to avoid any profanation of the important religious festival which began at sunset that evening.

I shall be happy to submit similar minor cases, in future, to Your Highness's jurisdiction, especially if I can expect a similar re-transfer to my own. In the matter of more important questions of judicial or political policy, Your Highness will appreciate the fact that, whatever my personal feelings may be, I am bound, by strict instructions from Rome, to deal with them at my own Headquarters.

I need not trouble Your Highness with further reports on the petty case in question. I am assured by many informants that the execution carried out on Friday has had the desired effect, and that there is no reason to fear any further disturbances, either here in Jerusalem or in Your Highness's Tetrarchy of Galilæa, where most of the condemned man's associates reside.

May I send my compliments to the Lady Herodias? If the customs of your country permit, I and the Lady Procula would naturally be delighted to include her in the welcome

we hope to give Your Highness at dinner in the *Prætorium*.

Would I presume too far if I asked whether her daughter, the Princess Salome, could also come as our guest? Her presence at, and after, dinner would add much to the entertainment of the company.

Health and happiness to Your Highness. Peace in Your Highness's home and family.

IX

PRIVATE LETTER. UNDATED. FROM JOPPA, JUDÆA.

*Lucius Septicius Claudius Felix sends greetings and respects
to his mother's sister, the Lady Claudia Lavinia.*

I DID not expect to write a letter to you, my dear aunt, but hoped to come straight home after seeing your daughter, Procula, so that I could bring you news of her by word of mouth, as soon as I landed in Italy. Let me begin by assuring you that it is good news. Maybe it will be all the better for being written down, now that it is fresh in my mind, and now that leisure for writing has been forced upon me. Writing to you is always a pleasure.

I am held up in this port of Joppa, not so much by lack of shipping as by the extreme unsavouriness of the accommodation offered to me, who am, after all, a patrician of Rome as well as a poet. I am sure that you would have approved, if only for reasons of health, of my refusal to travel in a wretched bi-reme which is to leave tomorrow with a cargo of negro slaves for Agrigentum. I positively had to hold my nose in the boat, when I went out to bargain with her skipper and listen to him whining about expenses and regulations. And I'm sure the smell will be much worse by the time half the blackamoors have died in the holds,



as I'm told they generally do before they reach Sicily.

It all ended by my telling the man that he could take this letter tomorrow for forwarding to Rome, but that he could not take me. I am hoping for a corn-ship. Or, if I'm lucky, I might get some man-o'-war, with a captain who isn't above accepting my fare for his private pocket and shipping a passenger that need not appear on his log.

Procula has no doubt mentioned in her letters that Pilate and she have to pay a visit to Jerusalem round about this time of year. The Jews seem to have a complicated kind of calendar. It was there that I saw her, not in their grand Palace at Cæsarea Palæstina. I stayed with them at the Jerusalem Prætorium for about a fortnight, and only left last Friday.

I fear I got a wrong impression from what you told me about Procula before I left Italy. Or maybe it was an out-of-date memory of a Procula who is changing more rapidly than her dear mother knows. How long is it since you had letters from her?

She has certainly changed enormously since we played together as children at Alba Fucentia, even since the time before her marriage when there was talk of her and me becoming—well, what shall I say?—more than playmates. But that's an old story, of no importance now. Even if I called it an old wound, I can assure you that it is healed and forgotten long ago.

Imagine me, then, on my journey up to Jerusalem, thinking out ways in which to tell a discontented and sometimes hysterical girl that she is as well off as most young wives these days; that even if Pilate isn't exactly an Apollo (either for good looks or for poetry!), he's a great deal better than many men she might have got tied up to, if she hadn't had such considerate parents as you and Proculus Crispus (to whom, by the way, my most respectful greetings). I thought of assuring her that you and he are quite right to disapprove of the way young people rush into separations nowadays,

and, as soon as they are rid of a tedious husband, expect to join what Plato, or some of his poetical hangers-on, called a soul-mate. I hope I may count myself as still young, and I've always claimed to be a poet of sorts; but I've seen too many soul-mates dwindle into equally tedious husbands to have any illusions about *that* time-honoured process. In such matters, my dear aunt, you and I are completely in agreement. I only wish that the members of our beloved Imperial Family, while its august head at Capræa issues so many edicts to discourage divorce, did not themselves so frequently change the partners of their bed and board.

I think you will be surprised, and I know you will be pleased, to learn that Procula, to judge by her present conduct and bearing, is now in agreement with us on this kind of matter. We used to think her flighty, and maybe we were right. She is a very different person now. She is most completely mistress of herself, and of her household. She looks after Pilate in the most dutiful and painstaking way, provides him with an excellent table, and supports him on official occasions—a very difficult matter in this curious country—with a grace and dignity that quite surprised me. I even found myself feeling how much I had missed by not . . .

Will you forgive me, my dear aunt, if I finish off this letter now, and tell you the rest of the news when I come? For some reason, best known to some unknown god, I don't want to write any more about Procula at the moment. I had the vilest of suppers tonight, an oily kind of stew containing, I should think, all three of the pigeons from which this so-called hostelry took its name twenty years ago. A doctor in Egypt told me that indigestion can give one pains round the heart.

But, heart-sick or belly-sick, I must send, before I close, every good wish for health and prosperity to you, to Proculus Crispus, and to your whole household, freemen or slaves, in the dear hills above Alba. The Gods watch over you all!! Farewell.

X

EXTRACT FROM THE RECORDS OF THE JUDICIAL
COMMITTEE OF THE SANHEDRIN. DATED NISAN
17 (3791).

*Motion put before the Executive Council by the Rabbi Adaiah
ben-Daniel.*

RECOMMENDED for immediate arrest, reprimand, and warning, the following three natives of Galilee, recently visiting Jerusalem, ostensively for the Passover celebrations:

1. Peter *alias* Simon *alias* Cephas, normally resident at Capernaum.
2. James ben-Zebedee, of the same place.
3. John, brother of 2.

The majority of the councillors present agreed at first that these three men might benefit by temporary arrest and reprimand before their departure for their homes in the north. Some dissentients, however, argued that no action was needed, as the execution of the Galilean last Friday had made sufficient impression to obviate any further disturbances.

Rabbi Adaiah, in reply, said that this was not a question of disturbances, but of danger to the purity of the national religion. He informed the meeting that all three suspects had recently been implicated in certain most undesirable proceedings at Mount Tabor, Galilee, evidently organised in order to support claims, made by the man recently condemned and executed, to divine sanction and support for his subversive teaching. The Rabbi pointed out that these claims had already been discussed and condemned by the whole Sanhedrin, convened for an emergency meeting at midnight on Thursday, when they were made the ground for

the capital charge. He admitted that it was not at present politic to apply to the Roman authorities for the execution of any further capital sentences, but suggested that such punishment as the Sanhedrin was empowered to inflict would be abundantly justified, and that the proposed reprimand and warning, an extremely lenient method of procedure, was certainly and urgently desirable.

Rabbi Adaiah supported his contention by asserting that the execution had not completely deterred the miscreants from their activities. At least two of the three suspects named had already been reported to him as concerned in an attempt to perpetuate the influence of the dead man by certain activities at or near his sepulchre. Exact details of these were not yet to hand, but prompt action was to be recommended, pending further information.

Asked whether the present whereabouts of the suspects was known, the Rabbi admitted that they were at present in hiding, but supposed that the Temple Guards could be ordered to discover their place of concealment.

RESOLVED. That no action be taken until further and more certain evidence was obtained of the continuation of undesirable activities, similar to those noted before Passover.

Rabbi Jonathan ben-Jaleel then reminded the President for the Day of a matter connected with the above—viz. the advisability of disposing of a certain sum of money, paid by the Court to Judas of Kerioth for information received and services rendered, but returned to the Treasury by that person shortly before his death. The Treasurer has expressed his unwillingness to retain funds accruing in this irregular manner, especially funds which might be described as blood-money.

In view of the apparent lack of precedents to indicate the proper procedure, it was suggested that the money should be expended on the purchase of a small plot of land, to be

used as a burial-ground for Samaritans, foreigners or other criminals.

The suggestion was unanimously approved and adopted.

XI

UNSIGNED NOTE. DATED PRID. KAL. MAI. APPARENTLY FROM SOME OFFICIAL IN THE PRÆTORIUM, JERUSALEM, ADDRESSED TO A SECRET CENTRE IN THE CITY, WHERE INFORMATION WAS COLLECTED, SIFTED AND FORWARDED TO THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES.

WE note that your daily report, received this morning, contains no further information about the GALILÆAN malcontents, whose leader was executed last Friday.

In view of the extremely dangerous situation which obtained (according to your own reports) immediately before that execution, your more recent opinion, that the danger was entirely liquidated by His Excellency's summary action, is (though flattering to His Excellency) not regarded as entirely satisfactory. It certainly needs confirmation, which you have omitted to supply.

His Excellency has meanwhile taken special notice of a paragraph which you rather injudiciously included in a recent Security Report, admitting that, while most agents confirm your optimistic conclusion, one contradictory estimate has come in—'from a source already regarded as extremely unreliable'. His Excellency wishes to see this estimate immediately. His Excellency remarked that reports tending to contradict pleasing conclusions are generally described as 'unreliable' on quite unreliable grounds.

Please submit what should have been submitted before.

You will be exceeding ill-advised, in future, to suppress or

withhold any reports which are out of harmony with the general chorus of your favourite paid agents.

Roughly-Scribbled Postscript. Be careful. The Lady Procula is concerned.

XII

ANSWER TO XI ABOVE. UNSIGNED. UNDATED.

I HAVE received Your Honour's communication.

It has never been our custom to submit, in detail, all reports received from our agents. We are normally trusted to summarise such reports, estimating (on the strength of long experience, and daily contact with the aforesaid agents) which of them may be regarded as more, and which as less, reliable. We are not aware of any occasion on which we have misused this confidence, or failed to supply daily summaries containing adequate and trustworthy information on all important developments in the city and district.

In the present case, we are happy to reassure Your Honour that the matter in question has ceased to be of any importance. Verbal information now being received confirms our first opinion that there is no further danger to public tranquillity. This information is now in course of being summarised, and the result will be forwarded to the PRÆTORIUM, through the usual channels, as soon as the work is completed.

It is true that we received, three days ago, one lengthy written report from a source which we can only describe again as completely unreliable. No purpose could be served by forwarding it now. It is already out-of-date. It is the work of an agent whom we have never trusted; during the last few days he has shown himself increasingly unbalanced and refractory. Warnings that he will be struck off the pay-

list have resulted in no improvement, but merely in new insolence and insubordination. The report in question contains, side by side with a great deal of inaccurate information, much wild speculation on matters quite foreign to the purpose for which agents are employed, and also some extremely insolent criticism of the ROMAN Imperial policy and even of His Excellency's interpretation of the wishes of ROME during his procuratorship of JUDÆA. It would be most ill-advised to submit such impertinences for His Excellency's personal perusal.

Postscript. In reply to your postscript, in re the Lady Procula. We would like to remind Your Honour that we are at present engaged in combating some extremely embarrassing rumours and wine-shop gossip on this subject. The authorities at the PRÆTORIUM would be well-advised to find some means of distracting her ladyship's attention from all matters of political or judicial importance.

XIII

ANSWER TO XII ABOVE.

It is you who grow impertinent.

It is not the custom of the PRÆTORIUM to accept such words as 'well-advised' and 'ill-advised' from arrogant native employees, hired to collect Secret Service reports from their even less reputable compatriots in the lower quarters of the city.

Such employees can be struck off the PRÆTORIUM pay-roll as easily as they presume to strike off such of their own minor agents as they like to call 'unreliable', without good reason given.

You will submit, forthwith, a report from the agent in

question. The document you withheld is presumably described as 'out-of-date' because you have now mislaid or destroyed it. If this be the case, you will immediately summon its writer to your Centre. You will instruct him to compile an up-to-date report on the present situation. You will not tell him that it is for His Excellency's personal perusal. You will make no allusion to his alleged 'insolence' or 'refractoriness' in former reports, and you will not suppress or tamper with what he writes in any way whatever.

The result must reach the PRÆTORIUM before nightfall.

Postscript. Matters mentioned in postscripts attached to any letter from the PRÆTORIUM will not be referred to in any written reply from your Centre. No such reply will in future have any postscript attached to it.

XIV

ANSWER TO XIII ABOVE.

ON receipt of Your Honour's clear and urgent instructions, this Centre has taken immediate steps to carry out Your Honour's wishes with a speed and exactitude which will, we feel certain, ensure their execution in a manner wholly satisfactory to Your Honour, and to His Excellency.

We are indeed grateful for Your Honour's above-mentioned instructions, clarifying a situation which we must beg pardon for having misinterpreted. Your Honour has made any such misinterpretation impossible in the future.

Everything will meanwhile be done to ensure that a full and up-to-date report from the agent in question (normally known to us under the pseudonym of 'SINON') reaches the PRÆTORIUM before nightfall. We must nevertheless remind Your Honour of Your Honour's own acute phrase about

agents being drawn, necessarily, from the 'less reputable' elements in the 'lower quarters' of the city, and must beg Your Honour's indulgence if it proves impossible to trace the man 'SINON' before the normal hours for summons or rendez-vous, which may be taken to begin with dusk.

May we conclude by assuring Your Honour of the most exact care and deference in all future transactions which Your Honour may see fit to entrust to us?

XV

PRIVATE LETTER. UNDATED.

L. Septicius Claudius Felix to C. Maccius Spintho, Greetings.

GREETINGS from—still, the gods curse the place!—Joppa.

I spent yesterday evening writing a dutiful letter to my aunt. Or, rather, three quarters of a letter. For some reason known only to Jove, I could not finish it. But I can tell you, tonight, some of the things that seemed then to clog my pen.

You may have gathered from my last letter that I went to Cæsarea, and then trailed up to Jerusalem, in order to read my cousin Procula an aunt-like lecture. Such, I take it, were the instructions tactfully concealed under the Lady Lavinia's request that I should "find out if my daughter is quite happy". Mothers can be very stupid.

The Procula I knew years ago would not have listened to lectures from anyone. The present one, a greatly changed person, needs no advice from persons like myself. I will not say she lectured me, because she did no such thing. But there were moments when, without saying anything or even looking at me, she made me feel that I am not quite such a fine fellow as I generally like to think myself.

She is certainly complete mistress of herself, and she looks after Pilate better than he deserves. But—happy? Who can get an answer to questions like that?

I am afraid you will think that it is not Jove, but Venus, who best knows my reasons for breaking off my letter last night. You'll be sure that merely seeing her again, after many years, with a husband at her side, has re-opened an old wound in me. You may be partly right, but that is not the whole story of my visit to Procula, my attempt to get inside her mind. Imagine yourself a woman, and imagine yourself married to Pilate.

It is not only that he is twenty years older than her, nearing his fiftieth birthday. It's not he may, for all I know, run after other women, slave girls or colleagues' wives. Most husbands do, especially in such countries as this. It's not that he's naturally unobservant, or insensitive. Rather the reverse. He seems to me to be schooling himself, forcing himself, as he grows older, not to observe too much, or be too sensitive about it. Men like him should not go out as Governors of tough-minded provinces. They grow more unscrupulous and brutal than the true-born brutes, and they become damnably irritable in the process, damnably selfish and inconsiderate of others. They seem to be saying all the time, "This isn't really my game, but I must show I can play it as well as other men." They end by playing it worse, more clumsily as well as more cruelly.

Between you and me, that's what Pilate has been doing ever since he came out here. He did himself no good by accepting the post (I suppose Sejanus offered it), and he has done Rome no good by the way he's managed things. I gather there's quite serious trouble boiling up. Not just the steam that has to be let off everywhere, but the kind of rebellion and slaughter which may call for a dozen full-strength legions, any time in the next ten, twenty, thirty years. You can guess at the domestic reactions—and the reactions upon Procula—in the Jerusalem Prætorium and (I imagine) the Cæsarea

Residency. His Excellency the Procurator eats well, sleeps not quite so well, and gradually grows to look more and more like a self-satisfied pig. But he's not really satisfied with anything, not even with himself. At bottom, I believe, he's frightened. Frightened, inside his comfortable and well-guarded sty. . . .

You may be right about Venus.

I was absurdly young when she married Pilate, and I used to read far too much Greek poetry, to say nothing of my beloved Catullus, though he never seemed to mind how many other men his Lesbia married, or didn't marry!

Maybe I do the man much injustice, but I still have a feeling that he knows himself to be, in some obscure fashion, a traitor to his kind. I wouldn't find it easy to say what his kind is. He hasn't an ounce of poet in him. There was once a modicum of scholar, now completely overlaid with administrative sharp-practice and demands for his signature to ungrammatical orders for pack-horse fodder or the crucifixion of salt-smugglers. There are still traces of the old sharp wit, an occasional quick answer to a stupid question, which recalls a former but less bitter Pilate. One would enjoy the wit more if he didn't repeat himself so often. But you should have seen his Syrian secretary's face when the man suggested an alteration in some document, and got back an almost savage, "What I've written, I've written!"

A little of the philosopher seems to survive in him. He entangled me in quite a long discussion, during my last evening at the Prætorium, on, if you please, the Nature of Truth. But it won't be long, I can foresee, before he has ceased to care whether there is or isn't such a thing as truth.

When I come to think of it, the discussion didn't happen on that Thursday, it was early next morning, the last time I saw either of them before coming down here to Joppa. (I've had one letter from Procula since, rather a curious one, with a touch of the old hysteria in it, which I think I should do

best to disregard altogether.) We were having an extremely early breakfast together, partly because Pilate had arranged convoy and escort for me soon after sunrise, partly because he himself had been dragged out of bed in the small hours by some Jewish priests. There was quite a crowd of the fellows on the colonnade outside, and a real mob in the square beyond, applauding them and shouting something about Cæsar in their own odd language. They wanted a criminal condemned or acquitted under Roman Law, and it had to be done (only the god of the Jews knows why!) before they went off and celebrated one of their festivals in the Jerusalem Temple. So Pilate had been called out of his beauty-sleep, to argue with them for hours before I was up and packing. I had finished that, and was breakfasting with Procula, before he was quit of them. I expected him to join us in the filthiest of tempers. I was wrong, as it turned out. He was just glum, a little irritable, and, I can only repeat, a little frightened. And then, if you please, came the discussion on Truth. A curious send-off from Pilate's house.

I suppose, by the way, that it had been a condemnation and not an acquittal. As I rode out of the Joppa gate and the centurion there saluted us, I heard the sound of large nails being hammered home, somewhere along the walls. But I shouldn't have thought that that sort of thing could disturb the mind of Pontius Pilate.

And Procula? You may well ask. She certainly seemed rather disturbed that morning, and, as I've said, there has been an odd letter from her since. I'm sure it will pass. I've never seen anyone who has so clearly been throwing out her anchors and, lately, finding that one at least of them has caught on rock. I think she'd have found anchorage long ago if he'd given her a baby or two. Lacking children, she's found some substitute inside herself. But it's a mystery to those who are outside.

Am I being too poetic if I say the world seems to be

populated by millions of mysteries on two legs? The most mysterious thing of all is the way they manage to interlock and get anything done at all—whether it's a baby begotten and brought up, or a Province administered. Here we all are, talking (or writing poems!) in dozens of different languages, discussing Truth, shipping negro slaves, saluting convoys or getting ourselves crucified for sedition; and somehow or other the gods make the whole idiotic sum add up to an Empire—with two or three other Empires outside, Persian and Indian and whatever is beyond, where more millions of two-legged idiots are doing even odder things. There must be gods indeed, whatever the Epicureans say, and they must take some care of us, or there'd soon be an end to our antics, and no mystery left to write poems or letters about.

One more mystery, and then I'll throw up this rather blunt pen, and go out to look for another ship or a decent meal—if Joppa can provide either!

I've written as though, even if I can't like Pilate, I can understand him. I don't. He said something at that breakfast-table which leaves me quite mystified. That Syrian servant or secretary of his was boring us all with long-winded condolences and apologies about His Excellency's rest being disturbed for this wretched law-case. I grow accustomed to Orientals, and impatient with them. I cut the fellow short by saying, "Anyway, it's all finished now!" I expected to hear old Pontius just grunt, and send the man packing. Instead of which, he raised those ugly great eyebrows of his, stared at me as if I had said something that really mattered, and then said, earnestly, almost like a bewildered child, "Do you think it really is finished—or just beginning?"

Make what you can of that!

I'm for supper now, taking this letter with me as soon as the ink's dry, and not leaving it about in my lodging for someone to steal and send up to the Jerusalem Prætorium. I am afraid you will find it a poor and puzzling piece of

writing. Accept the excuse that it has helped me to pass the time, and time needs passing till I get my ship.

Farewell.

XVI

COVERING LETTER TO NO. XVII. FROM THE INFORMATION CENTRE IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM.
UNSIGNED. UNDATED.

FURTHER to our communication of yesterday.

Your Honour is requested to pardon the delay, adumbrated by the above-mentioned communication, in complying with Your Honour's orders.

It proved impossible to establish contact with the person in question until well after the fall of dusk. He was brought to this Centre towards midnight. Your Honour's wishes were then communicated to him, and the instructions concerning his opportunity of carrying them out, without interference, influence or intimidation, were most exactly obeyed.

The resultant report is attached herewith.

Assuring Your Honour of a similar punctiliousness and devotion in all future duties entrusted to us, we remain Your Honour's most obedient servants.

XVII

SECRET AGENT'S REPORT. UNDATED.

I AM told that His Excellency's Headquarters has issued an urgent order for more information from my pen, on the developments of Case No. X. I am not surprised to hear this. His Excellency, judging by the apparently complete inaction at the PRÆTORIUM, must be urgently in need of further, and more reliable, information.

The whole case has clearly been mishandled from the first. Does His Excellency now believe that, after truckling to the hasty demands of a set of highly-placed rogues (the JEWISH SANHEDRIN is nothing else), and passing a single sentence of death on one malcontent, he can safely (in his own much-quoted phrase) 'wash his hands' of the whole business, and relapse into pompous sloth?

This appears to be his intention. I discovered two days ago (and all JERUSALEM has recently learnt) that secret military orders have been issued such as soon become public topics in the bazaars. A whole Cohort of the X. Legion is to be marched away to Syria, leaving us with a garrison barely sufficient for safety in more normal times. What all JERUSALEM will do, as soon as the soldiers' backs are turned, appears to be nobody's business. It should be His Excellency's.

The false sense of security implied is probably the result of not acting on my former reports and recommendations. Possibly of not even reading them.

The times are far from normal. We are barely through Passover—and what a Passover! I have been run right off my legs, collecting information in every quarter of the city, and in half a dozen villages round it; issuing secret warnings to those who are supposed to be responsible for Law and

Order; trying to din into the deaf ears of Authority such facts, Facts, FACTS, as might persuade the stupidest official of the great dangers that now impend. If Authority does not quickly take some of the measures which I have again and again recommended, it may soon become unsafe for any ROMAN to show his face in JERUSALEM—let alone try to govern it. This may well be the situation in a few months' time, possibly in a few weeks, unless (as seems increasingly unlikely) some of my timely and urgent advice is at last accepted. My only consolation will be that I at least did my best to avert disaster.

The one other man who had some real sense of the danger, and did something about it, has now been murdered. I shall have something to say, later in this report, about the failure of Authority to protect its own agents, glaringly shown in the case of this man, known to us under the pseudonym of RUFUS. It illustrates the very great risks which men of public spirit and devotion must constantly be facing, in the midst of long nights of incessant and intricate toil.

What is our reward? I have never yet been granted funds for a proper assistant, such as might relieve me of some drudgery and help me take precautions against personal dangers. My own pay is now six months in arrears, and the meagre allowance I get for rewarding minor informants is quite inadequate to secure a reasonable flow of trustworthy verbal reports. I should not be surprised to hear that even this allowance is now to be reduced, in view of the supposed passing of the recent emergency.

The emergency has not passed. The danger has been merely driven underground by His Excellency's unwise capitulations to SANHEDRIN influence and his hasty, untimely measures against one of the malcontents. It is increasing, and will undoubtedly continue to do so in the future. Authority can only shut its eyes to this by refusing to accept the plain Facts which I supply, and by handing out large sums of money to impostors and flatterers, whose only aim

is to soothe their paymasters into a false feeling of safety. If I were not heart and soul devoted to the cause of maintaining the power of ROME and the majesty of our beloved Emperor, TIBERIUS CÆSAR, I should long ago have put my wide experience, my undeniable talents, and my courage (yes, I have shown great courage) at the disposal of one of the subversive organisations into which my ingenuity has enabled me to penetrate. Some enemies of ROME pay better than ROME herself.

An instance of the folly of leaving agents unrewarded occurs to me as I write. I recently received an interesting but very brief report on a contact that was recently established between a highly-placed member of the SANHEDRIN and a traveller proceeding from EGYPT to ROME, a certain SEPTIMIUS OR SEPTICIUS FELIX. My request for further details of this extremely suspicious interview has been met by a demand from my informant for more money. I have none to give him, and therefore nothing to report to the PRÆTORIUM on a matter which may yet prove important.

Would Authority like to hear of one more instance, and a recent one, of wool being pulled over Its eyes by interested rogues? The rogues in question are not, this time, the leaders of the SANHEDRIN. They are certain gentlemen who have acquired great skill in keeping out of the public eye, while they arrange for a mob to make demonstrations, raise riots, or collect at some convenient moment to shout out the kind of thing it is paid to shout. One such mob besieged the ROMAN PRÆTORIUM in the early hours of last Friday, shouting, among other things, for the release of BARABBAS. BARABBAS, of all men! I know that he is merely listed as 'Robber' in the clumsily-kept records at the PRÆTORIUM. I also know that, since his release, some donkey in the police service has attributed to him a minor brigandage on the JERICHO road. (I happen to know the name of the real brigand, but I am not including it in this report, or any other, until I am assured of some adequate reward for reliable

information which will undoubtedly lead to an arrest.) Actually, BARABBAS is not so much a robber as a leading light in the secret organisation of the ZEALOTS, ROME'S worst though most covert enemies in this country. He is a member of that particularly dangerous section of the ZEALOT Party which calls itself the SICARII, or Dagger-men. BARABBAS is nowhere near the JERICHO road. He has gone west, not east, to a secret headquarters of the ZEALOTS, to discuss the next move in the sub-war they are organising against ROMAN administration. I would not be surprised if the next move they are plotting was an order to BARABBAS to plant a dagger in the body of the ROMAN Procurator who so kindly released him in deference to the shoutings of the multitude!

I only cite this case of official idiocy (one among many), to show that I have good reason to despair of success in convincing numbskulls at the PRÆTORIUM. If the present neglect continues, I shall have only one alternative. I shall have to send my valuable information direct to ROME, where I have many and powerful friends (whose names might frighten even the PRÆTORIUM out of its sloth), and await the entertaining result of such information being forwarded immediately to CAPRI. The above-mentioned mob shouted a lot of nonsense, but there was some sense in its cry to His Excellency, "Thou art not CÆSAR'S friend!" This sense, properly reported to ROME and CAPRI, might produce a very considerable change of personnel in the administration of PALESTINE.

I have spoken of the murder of the agent called RUFUS. Now that he is dead, there is little object in using his pseudonym, and it may be better to describe him under the name he derived from his parents and birthplace. JUDAS BEN-JUDAS ISCARIOT was not a man with whom I can feel any complete sympathy. He seems to have entered into subversive activities owing to a real though misguided enthusiasm for the future benefits which so many JEWS imagine that their race will derive from the appearance of a divinely-favoured, and presumably anti-ROMAN, 'MESSIAH'. When hard facts

cured him of that pathetic delusion, he foolishly put his services at the disposal of the JEWISH SANHEDRIN. But this body, with all its faults, is sufficiently under SADDUCEAN influence to realise the folly of anti-ROMAN activities; it is also sufficiently alive to its own interests, whether in matters of prestige or in matters of its members' incomes, to welcome agents who disclose anti-ROMAN conspiracies. If JUDAS had gone straight to the ROMAN PRÆTORIUM with his information, that august institution would probably have grudgingly paid him even the thirty pieces of silver which the SANHEDRIN paid.

He has now been strangled for his pains. I suppose the GALILEAN malcontents, who presumably took this revenge on the traitor in their midst, are congratulating themselves on having liquidated the only source of leakage in their organisation. There are other sources. I have got into touch with them. I am putting some of the results of my penetration at the disposal of the PRÆTORIUM.

JUDAS ISCARIOT was an obvious case of mental and moral instability. My own information, derived from more reliable origins, is as follows:

All the ringleaders (apart from JUDAS himself, who comes from the KERIOTH in JUDÆA) are of GALILEAN origin. The conspiracy has therefore been hatched in the North, where the Security Service of the Tetrarch HEROD seems to be even more slothful and remiss than that of ROMAN Authority in JERUSALEM and JUDÆA.

A list I have compiled of the most dangerous of these ringleaders contains 13 names. This number has now been reduced to 11, by the execution of the arch-conspirator on Friday, and his associates' subsequent murder of JUDAS.

These 13, being almost entirely GALILEAN, were completely under the influence of the PHARISAICAL, anti-SADDUCEAN and therefore anti-ROMAN principles in which the majority of GALILEANS unfortunately grow up. It is observable that, while the central leader constantly denounced PHARISEES for their well-known hypocrisy, and for moral laxity in not

abiding by their own principles, he never repudiated those principles himself. Indeed, he instructed his followers to act upon them. (A report which I obtained from GALILEE, at great expense, proves that one item in his teaching was "Whatsoever the PHARISEES bid you observe, that observe and do . . ." followed by a warning against PHARISEES who fail to act upon the rules of their own sect.)

This PHARISAICAL tendency naturally prevented the 13 ringleaders from celebrating their Passover (as did all SADDUCEES, and indeed all reasonably-minded JEWS) on Friday evening, since that evening is reckoned, from sunset onward, as part of the Sabbath. The celebration was held (in secret) on the previous night, in a first-storey room in the suburbs of JERUSALEM. Admission was gained by establishing contact with the householder, a confederate, who was to be met in the street. There he was to carry a pitcher of water on his head, and to be accosted with the conspirators' password, "The Master saith, 'Where is the guest-chamber?'" (A similar pass-word, 'The Lord hath need of him', had already been used for providing a mount, from another confederate, for entry into JERUSALEM on the previous Sunday).

The unfortunate JUDAS appears to have left this Passover meeting before the other conspirators. He wished to report their whereabouts, and their probable future movements, to the SANHEDRIN. This early departure may have aroused their suspicions, and thus led to their successful plot to assassinate him by strangulation in the HINNOM valley. Some attempt has been made to provide false evidence of suicide, rather than murder; but no intelligent observer is likely to be deceived.

Men capable of such a crime are clearly dangerous to all public security. But I have collected plenty of evidence to show that the danger is of far greater proportions than is indicated by such a minor act of violence. I write in hope that my report will be submitted to His Excellency in person. If His Excellency had penetrated, as I have, into some of the

meetings of the organisations, if he had but seen the look on these men's faces——! There can be no question but that we have to deal with a body of enthusiasts and fanatics who, however misguided, are impelled by such spiritual power as would suffice, not merely to destroy the authority of ROME in this country, but to overturn the whole world.

I am obliged to put one more question to His Excellency. How could he possibly imagine that he was scotching the danger, let alone destroying it, by ordering the crucifixion of a single leader? Incidentally this leader was outwardly one of the least addicted to violence and sedition. Even the accusation that he counselled non-cooperation by the withholding of tribute to CÆSAR was false. He acted as a break upon the section of his followers which advocated actual rebellion. He is now dead, and His Excellency has left alive, and active, a well-organised body of his more dangerous followers and supporters. They have already abandoned the common claims and customs of humanity in favour of a communal sharing-out of their money or possessions. They will now, owing to His Excellency's inconsiderate hastiness, have the memory of a crucified prophet, a Martyr, to cast the specious mantle of his sufferings, and violent death, over all their subversive activities in the future.

I might perhaps add one small point, sufficient in itself to convince all but the most stubbornly slothful or prejudiced intelligences. Eleven highly dangerous sedition-mongers (many of whom I recommended for arrest and examination a year ago, on their previous journey to JERUSALEM for the Passover of last April) have now been warned of danger and prompted to take precautions against it. They have naturally gone into hiding, in places to which even I may take days, possibly weeks, to trace them, and report upon them. Among them are two men whose very diverse records show the extraordinary, and extraordinarily dangerous, nature of the tie which must bind them together. I am not speaking of their ostensible leader, the hot-headed and yet cowardly

fisher-fellow, SIMON PETER, nor of the more deceptive young quietist, JOHN, the dead teacher's particular intimate: still waters run deep. I refer to two members of the gang who have managed to remain in more impenetratable obscurity. One is also called SIMON, but nicknamed ZELOTES. He is thus branded as a recruit from that secret society I have already mentioned. Its members take oath to stab to death all supporters of the ROMAN administration, and particularly all publicans or other collectors of the lawful taxation imposed by ROME upon this country. The second, called MATTHEW, is, or was, just such a tax-gatherer, a collector of customs-dues in the fishing-harbour of TIBERIAS, in GALILEE. Will His Excellency, or any other less excellent personage at the PRÆTORIUM, please tell me by what magic spell, or by what unnatural cunning, the dead teacher managed to keep two such men in double harness under his direction? How did he even prevent his PHARISAICAL pre-Passover supper, on Thursday night, being disturbed by the sudden drawing and flashing of the ZEALOT's dagger?

I think that I myself know the answer to that question. I am quite sure that no one at the PRÆTORIUM knows it—or will know it, until the PRÆTORIUM changes its whole Secret Service policy, dismisses the tricksters and toadies to whom it now pays high salaries, and expends a little money in return for more trustworthy and more factual information.

I have called this a small point. I am tempted to end by mentioning a greater, more momentous one. I have only just had my first verbal reports on it. Already it bids fair to eclipse all other matters in striking and lasting importance. The ringleader was executed during the hours of daylight on Friday. His dead body was removed from the cross before sunset, that is, before the beginning of the 24-hours of Sabbath on the same evening. It was placed in a tomb adjacent to the place of execution, outside the western walls of the city. I have reliable, but at present fragmentary, reports about a visit paid to his burial-place by the above-

mentioned GALILEANS, PETER and JOHN, in the early hours of yesterday morning. I will conclude, on the basis of these reports, with a question which will not yet have been asked, certainly not answered, in the Information-room at His Excellency's PRÆTORIUM. It will have to be asked, and answered, soon. What happened at the sepulchre last Sunday morning?

(signed) 'SINON'.

XVIII

COMMENT ON NO. XVII ABOVE. FROM THE JERUSALEM PRÆTORIUM. UNSIGNED. UNDATED.

You win. The report is pure rubbish. It would have been much better not to submit this sort of stuff to His Excellency, and I wish I could order you to strike your precious SINON off the pay-roll immediately.

I began by hoping that His Excellency was going to take the same view. His first comment after reading it was "But the man's mad!"

There were, unfortunately, second thoughts. His Excellency's character is by no means a simple one. Our task, here at the PRÆTORIUM, is a more difficult one than you (or your agent, SINON) appear to recognise.

His Excellency, believe it or not, has now ordered investigation to be made into the man's transparently ridiculous boast that he has friends at ROME—or anywhere in ITALY. You will oblige me by showing it to be a pure lie.

His Excellency has also ordered enquiries to be made (at your discretion) into the following two matters:

I. Previous record of the man called SIMON ZELOTES. How recently can he be proved to have been attached to the ZEALOT faction of anti-ROMAN sedition-mongers?

II. Evidence (if any) of connection between the same faction and the recently released BARABBAS.

You may judge it necessary to use for these purposes the services of your SINON. If so, he need not be paid for them. Rewards only increase the self-importance and the impertinence of such creatures.

It might be better if you also made a few enquiries (not through this SINON fellow) as to what happened at the sepulchre.

Postscript. His Excellency has just asked me to obtain the names and records of the undesirables who are alleged to have bribed a mob to shout at him 'No friend to CÆSAR!' last Friday morning.

You had better add this to your list of things that need watching. But, by all the gods, be careful whom you set to watch 'em!

XIX

CIRCULARISED MESSAGE. DICTATED AND
WRITTEN DOWN BY PERSONS UNKNOWN.
DATED NISAN 17 (3791).

GREAT things have come, and are now coming, to pass.
He sayeth: 'I go before you into Galilee'.
Let all follow, and learn what happened at his tomb.
I have asked that it be written, not 'said', but 'sayeth'.

XX

MILITARY ORDER. DATED FROM THE JERUSALEM
PRÆTORIUM PRID. KAL. MAI. COSS. TIB. SEI.

*T. Bapinius Statius, Sub-Prefect in charge of civil relations,
to P. Licinius Crassus Mucianus, Military Tribune, Xth
Legion.*

PLEASE supply name and record of Centurion in charge of the execution-squad detailed for the carrying out of the Procurator's sentence on three criminals passed a.d.v. Kal. Mai.

Information has now been lodged at this Headquarters to the effect that the above-mentioned Centurion, shortly before the completion of his duties, was heard to use indiscreet language in the presence of his own soldiers and of certain natives, residents of JERUSALEM.

He is alleged to have spoken of one of the three convicted men as being in some way connected with, or even related to, the Immortal Gods.

While the regulations permit of all ranks holding any recognised form of religious opinion, expression of such opinions—apart from those connected with the worship of DEÆ ROMA or DIVUS CÆSAR—is always to be deprecated during the hours of duty. Words such as those attributed to the above-mentioned Centurion, suggesting an attitude of reverence towards an individual under a sentence of death recently passed by His Excellency the Procurator, may constitute a grave breach of military discipline.

In view of the dubious and possibly dangerous situation obtaining at the time (and only recently liquidated) such words might well be held to have imperilled public security. Pending investigation, this Headquarters is obliged to take a serious view of the alleged offence.

It is hoped that the allegations, emanating from wealthy and respectable, though native, sources, may prove to be groundless. Please supply name, record and any other details which may assist enquiry into the whole matter.

XXI

OFFICIAL LETTER. DATED FROM THE PRÆTORIUM,
JERUSALEM, PRID. KAL. MAI.

T. Papinius Statius, Sub-Prefect, to the Rabbi Josias ben-Joachim, President-by-rote of the Executive Committee of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, Greeting.

His Excellency the Procurator of Judæa instructs me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated yesterday, 16th of Nisan, requesting him to institute an official enquiry into certain recent happenings. He also instructs me to reply that he sees no adequate reasons for instituting the suggested enquiry.

Whatever may have happened, two days ago, at the sepulchre in question, His Excellency cannot regard the matter as seriously involving the interests of the Imperial administration.

His Excellency advises Your Reverences, if their own interests demand some such enquiry, to apply for countenance and support to His Highness Herod, Tetrarch of Galilæa, who may possibly be interested in the matter. The deceased was undoubtedly a Galilæan subject by origin, and, as such, was temporarily submitted to His Highness the Tetrarch, before his re-submission to Roman jurisdiction and the passing of the death-sentence.

Your Reverence is also reminded that your predecessor-by-rote in the Presidency, after forwarding to this Prætorium

an entirely inadmissible application for a picket of Roman soldiers to be detailed for night-watch over the above-mentioned sepulchre, was instructed to supply some such picket from the Jewish Temple Guard which the Sanhedrin is permitted, by Imperial clemency, to recruit, arm and maintain under its own orders. Any undesirable consequences which may have followed, either from neglect of this precaution, or from misbehaviour of the Guard in question, must be regarded purely as a matter for consideration, and action, on the part of the Sanhedrin, without interest for the Imperial administration.

XXII

PRIVATE LETTER. FROM JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, MERCHANT OF JERUSALEM, TO THE RABBI NICODEMUS, PHARISEE AND MEMBER OF THE JERUSALEM SANHEDRIN.

YUSUF, called of Ramathaim, to his friend and Rabbi, Nakdemon ben-Gorion, Councillor in the Sanhedrin and Doctor in God's Law, greetings and health.

I am told that you left the city, my dear friend, as soon as the Passover was accomplished, and that you are now among your vineyards at Beth-Jala. The news reached me in strange fashion, as you shall now hear.

Soon after you and I had laid the dead Teacher in my own sepulchre, two of his followers came to shelter at my house during the time of their bewilderment. They were, perhaps, in no great danger, but the shepherd was slain and his sheep scattered. Their hearts failed them.

They departed this morning for Galilee. I will not set down their names, lest this letter go astray. For myself, I care not if I am arraigned for harbouring men suspected by

the Sanhedrin; but I would not lighten the task of the Sanhedrin in tracking down such men.

I talked much to them, by night, of their master's death. They told me that you, who had no hand in the doings whereby other Councillors of the Sanhedrin compassed that death, were in like manner giving shelter to some of his friends, out at Anathoth. They received written messages, by what means I refrained from enquiring, and I helped them by reading the messages, and writing down the replies they dictated.

We talked of the dead man's sayings, and I reminded them, whose hopes seemed almost to have died with him, that he had said his kingdom was not of this world. How could it be? You and I know, my dear Rabbi, what is mercifully hidden from simple labourers and fishermen. You and I know what filth circles and clings round the Kings and Princes of this world. They live in darkness, and he was Light.

I reminded them of something you had told me—of how, when you went to visit him secretly in Galilee, he spoke of himself as of one that must be lifted up, not to a throne but on a cross. So end all the children of Light who dare to challenge the power of darkness. I am only glad that I was enabled to give that king of men, that royal heir of David ben-Jesse, a more fitting sepulchre than Pilate and his soldiers allow to most of those whom they kill.

I do not write to tell you of this. We can speak of it as soon as you return to the city, or at least in a few weeks' time, when we can more safely be seen together. Maybe we would be wise to avoid each other for that space, or only exchange cold greeting if we meet. Meanwhile I have work for your hand and tongue. It is of such great moment that I risk writing to you now.

I have said that, since the shepherd was slain, fear stalks abroad among the scattered sheep. Like all men in fear, they seek to comfort themselves, and each other, with vain

imaginings. Their wish becomes, too often, father to their thoughts. It is for us, who know that we are in no great danger, us who are more learned than they, in books or in the wisdom of the world, to teach them the vanity of mere wishes, the sovereignty of Truth.

Listen. These poor men in my house, and certain of their friends in other hiding-places, are now persuading themselves that their Teacher was dead, but is alive again. ~~Pity~~ Pity their simplicity, but help me to free them from the chains of their error.

You and I know that there is not and cannot be any rising from the dead. Sheol enlarges her mouth to swallow up the sons of men: never has she opened it to let one forth again.

You are of the school of the Pharisees, and you will not think me discourteous if I remind you how many hard words the dead teacher spoke against the leaders of that school. You look for another life, perhaps for rewards and punishments in another world. For my part, I consider that the Sadducees are right in saying that you can find no warrant for your belief in all our holy scriptures. I am neither Pharisee nor Sadducee, being tied to no school or party. No matter for that. All should agree on one thing—that, whether or no there be another life, in some other world, a man once dead can never walk this earth again, in such body as he bore in life.

I know what the Teacher is said to have done, out at Bethany. I know that, at his call, his friend Lazarus was seen to walk out of a rock-tomb in which he had lain for four days. I need no proof to assure me that this thing happened. I know those who tell the tale, and they are not liars. But I need, and shall never see, proof that Lazarus had ever died. The cunningest Greek physicians will tell you that they cannot always distinguish between death and a certain kind of deathlike trance—they call it *Catalepsis*—into which a sick man may fall, and yet recover, walk again, and live.

I believe most firmly that the dead Teacher had power to

quiet tempests, to feed the hungry with loaves more miraculously multiplied than the Manna of ancient days. He could heal all manner of diseases and madresses, and raise up a few whom others thought were dead. But that he could indeed put life into a corpse, another man's or that poor crucified body of his own which you and I laid to rest in the garden—that no human being has ever done, or ever will do on this earth.

It is easy to understand the wish-born thought of my simple friends, that this impossibility was in some way possible for him whom they loved and trusted. I can neither share it myself nor countenance it in them. I must combat it for the sake of a harsher but a saner Truth. I write to ask for your help in the combat.

I would be glad to persuade you, Pharisee though you are, that even your hope of continued life in another world is the fruit, not of reason, not (as even you will admit) of study in the ancient scriptures, but of human wish, of human fear at the thought of oblivion. It was the same human craving for immortality which made proud Pharaohs enslave our ancestors, in order to build those stupendous pyramids which still stand by the Nile, witnesses not to their survival, but to human folly. I would ask you to think again, my dear friend and Rabbi, and to think most earnestly, searching the depths of your heart, before you commit yourself to the flattering faith that our candle-flames, once blown out, can ever shine again, even in another and a distant world.

We are made in God's image, but we are made human, not divine or ever-lasting. He created us to be children of a day, and demands of us that we serve Him faithfully through that little day, not yearning and whining for reward and recompense hereafter. Did Abraham serve God for pay? Did Moses free our race at the first Passover, in return for any promise of comfort and delight on the far side of the tomb? Can any man today, true believer or pagan, call himself dutiful or virtuous, if his duty and virtue are bargains made

in expectation of a reward hereafter? God is far above us, loving yet austere. He demands from us not only the obedience and the reverence which you and all good men give Him in this life, but also the courage to face a nothingness beyond.

I grow old now. I have schooled myself a little, and been much schooled, under God's wisdom, by the chances and frustrations of this sad life. But I want no other life, expect none anywhere. I am proud to serve Him here, desiring no recompense beyond.

I shall not convince you with my weak words. I can only pray that events, that experience, will one day convince you, and cure you of human cravings. Meanwhile we are at one in other matters, close friends in all. I ask your help in one such matter, on which we must surely be agreed.

The Teacher is dead. We have buried him. We shall not see him walk this earth again. We must persuade his friends and followers—with gentleness befitting their ignorance—that their new hope is vain.

I am told that he himself spoke of rising again. I never heard such words from his lips, though I heard many which wish-ful hope might misinterpret in some such sense. You, Rabbi, whose life is bound up with words and phrases and conflicting interpretations, know only too well how sadly such things can be twisted to serve men's purposes. I am told that your fellow Councillors of the Sanhedrin, meeting at midnight in the Hall of Hewn Stone (but not calling you to that shameful tribunal), twisted his words into blasphemies, in order that they might send him to Pilate and the cross. I fear that what is done, out of malice, by a man's wickedest enemies can also be done, out of simplicity and false hope, by his dearest friends. It is most easily done when he is dead and cannot rise again to make his meaning clearer.

I myself, only a week or two ago, heard him say words that seem to me to contradict the hopes that are now rooting

themselves in his memory. I came upon him in the Outer Court of the Temple, amid the crowds of Jews and foreigners, worshippers and sightseers, which fill that Court at the time of Passover. After we had spoken for a while (he was not then preaching to the multitude), two of his Galilean followers, by name Philip and Andrew, brought to him some Greek travellers who had asked to see his face. They may perhaps have been some kin to Philip, since his name, too, is Greek.

He did indeed tell those strangers that he was shortly to be 'glorified': he has been so, by the manner and the courage of his death. Had he meant more than that, he would surely have spoken to them of rising again from that Sheol which the Greeks call Hades. Then, when his prophecy had been swiftly fulfilled, they could have gone home to tell their countrymen of a miracle outmatching all their lying fables of Zeus and Pluto and the rest. He was no fool. He must have known, if he was about to rise from the grave, that Philip had brought him the best of all chances whereby his glory, and the glory of the God he worshipped, might be spread among all nations of the earth.

We are Jews. But neither I nor, I trust, you believe that he came with a message for Jews alone. You will have heard how he angered his own kinsfolk and neighbours in Nazareth, till they all but threw him to death on their rocks—because he had preached in their synagogue of God's mercy shown to Gentiles and foreigners, to Naaman the Syrian, and to the Sidonian widow at Sarepta. The young man, John, told me of another thing that he once said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold." Had he indeed spoken to his followers of a rising from death (as many of them now vainly imagine), then surely, with death so near, he would have spoken of it to these strangers from the sheep-fold of Greece.

Listen and learn what he did say to them. I was beside him, and heard. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the

ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." He could only have meant one thing by that. We men are but grains of wheat. Our life is to sacrifice life, in order that others may live here more nobly in our place. No man will ever persuade me that there is any wisdom but this.

Help me to preach this wisdom. Continue the work after I have gone. I have not yet told you (as I meant to do) that I grow weary of Jerusalem, weary of this whole land, in which I have laboured long, and gathered much vain wealth. Another and a better man lies in the sepulchre I built for myself. I would be glad to lay my bones afar.

I purpose to use my wealth in order to travel. I shall go westward, to Greece and to Italy, perhaps further to Gaul and Spain. If it should prove possible, I would gladly go further still, to lands where no Roman governs and crucifies. My heart is very sick, since that last Friday. It might find healing in very distant countries, perhaps among the Britons of the Islands, whence our ships bring tin.

You will tell me that this is a sickly dream, and a purposeless one. No, I have a purpose. I am no learned doctor, as you are. I am no shepherd of souls, as he was. I am, or have been, only a merchant, a trafficker in the goods of this world. But perhaps God gave me riches and long life in order that I might visit some of the other sheep-folds of which he spoke, and tell there the story of his life, his teaching and his death. My little grain of wheat might strike root far away, and bring forth some fruit after it had withered and died.

There is other work for you, here in Jerusalem. Add to it this task I now lay on you. Persuade, with your learning and your authority, those of the dead man's followers who stumble under this new-born error.

The false rumour of his rising-again began to spread among them two days ago, on the morrow of the Sabbath. Already it flies widely and wildly among the villages where some have

sought shelter. Two, at Emmaus, have persuaded themselves that they met him, risen, on the highway. The stories may already have reached you in your vineyards at Beth-Jala. Help me to prove them vain. Help me to remind all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, of the great words he spoke to us while he was still alive, and to turn away their minds from false tales of what happened at his sepulchre.

☞ Farewell. The God of Israel be with you always.

XXIII

ANSWER TO NO. XXII ABOVE. NICODEMUS TO JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA. UNDATED.

He has risen.

XXIV

PRIVATE LETTER (UNFINISHED) FROM JOPPA.
UNDATED.

L. S. Claudius Felix to C. P. Cæcilius Secundus, Learned in the Law, Greeting and Good Health.

You may or may not remember me, a wanderer to whom you showed kindness and hospitality at Cæsarea Palæstina, when I first reached this country from Egypt.

You spoke then of following the Procurator Pilate up to Jerusalem, when you had finished some legal business at the capital. I am hoping we may meet there—on legal business. I have by chance had a letter from the wife of the Procurator (who is, as I told you then, my cousin) suggesting that I should make contact with you.

I was in Jerusalem for a fortnight, left it a few days ago, but seem now to be returning there, by order of the Procurator. Let me explain.

I had hopes of getting away from Joppa yesterday, on a corn-ship which had bargained to take me all the way home to Italy. I was whiling away my last and most boring hours in this wretched lodging-house from which I write, by (I think I told you I am a poet of sorts) composing bad verse to celebrate my homeward journey. An hour ago, I hadn't got much further than the first line (which, you will observe, I stole from Catullus):

'Through many a land, o'er many a sea, I've come.'

Then there was a great banging on the street door below, and I looked out to see a Centurion, with half a dozen men in marching-order. They had come, if you please, to order me back to Jerusalem, just when I was expecting to get off to Rome.

I tried to discover what it was all about, but I haven't been able to get anything out of the Centurion. Just "Procurator's orders, sir," and then a mouth shut like a rat-trap. He's only said one other thing that matters, and I didn't like it at all. I asked if there were any Procurator's orders against my writing letters before we start. He answered "You can *write* one, sir," in a tone which implied that no one in Rome or anywhere else would ever read it—except perhaps the Procurator in Jerusalem.

I suppose Pilate has powers to do most things inside his Province, especially as far as the Provincials are concerned. But I should have thought (you'll correct me if I'm wrong) that he'll have to show cause, sooner or later, for stopping the departure of a traveller of my status, and putting him under even temporary arrest. I'd certainly like to have his powers tested, or at least questioned, by someone who knows more about the law than myself. That's why I'm writing to

you. So far I've got past everyone and everything, in Greece, Syria and even Egypt (where the formalities seem the queerest and strictest), by just saying, "Roman citizen", and walking straight on, generally past a bobbing head and a bending knee. This business looks like being more serious.

I'm supposed, now, to be packing up for the road, while the Centurion waits downstairs, or bargains with some swindler in Joppa for a set of fresh horses. I had nearly everything already packed, for my sea-voyage, so I have time to scribble this, with no watchful sergeant-major-eye upon me. I may not get a chance later.

I may also have difficulty in getting it to you, especially as I don't know where you are staying in Jerusalem. You said something about hiring a villa outside, on the Joppa road. I'll wave to you if I see you when we pass! But getting a letter to you may prove more difficult.

If I manage to do so, by hook or crook, will you be a good friend, or at least a good lawyer, and come round to the Prætorium to ask Pilate what authority he has for interrupting my journey?

I believe his reasons for doing so are personal ones. There is a possibility of jealousy. I've known his wife since childhood, and he may have built evil imaginings on that slight fact. But he could hardly talk about that in a law court, unless he wants to get every monkey in this country laughing at him as a cuckold.

I have a notion that he's recently had news from Rome, from Italy anyway (which may take another week or more to reach you and me and the rest of Palestine), and that, for some reason I can't quite fathom, he doesn't want anyone to go back to Rome and tell tales. What sort of tales? Ask me another question, as the Sphinx might have said. We agreed, over supper in Cæsarea, that Pilate is a curious man, and perhaps a dangerous one. He has certainly got a curious and dangerous kind of country to govern, and after six or seven

years at the job he seems to have grown as unscrupulous as most of the natives.

He may think I'm safe game, but he'll have to take rather more notice of anything you say. You told me that you are going back to Rome yourself, later in the year, and he can't send his Centurions to stop men like you, who move about on an Imperial commission. He must know that some of the things you say or write get to Capræa, or, anyway to the ears of Sejanus, which is just as good—if not better.

There's no sound of horse-hooves in the street, and, apart from an occasional grunt from the man he's stationed on the landing outside, no sign of my lantern-jawed Centurion. Maybe I've a little more time. I'm going to use it by trying to tell you about an extraordinary idea that keeps coming back into my head. It may be all rubbish. You, who know this country a little better than I do, may be able to tell me whether there is, or isn't, any sense in it.

You know that, legally speaking, there isn't supposed to be a single Jew in Rome—isn't supposed to have been one ever since my lord Sejanus rose to power and advised His Majesty the Emperor to have the lot of them banished, or sent to bite their thumbs in Sardinia, twelve years ago. You must also know that there are now plenty of Jews in Rome, in defiance of legal theory. You can guess, as I do, that they are quietly in correspondence with their uncles, cousins and nephews in this country—some of the uncles probably being high up in the Sanhedrin, or in some other place where they might make trouble for an unwary Procurator. I would not be at all surprised to hear that secret prayers were being put up, in quite a number of Jewish synagogues, for the impossible miracle of the Emperor withdrawing his august favour from Sejanus, and leaving all the nominees of Sejanus, governing this and most other provinces of the Empire, in a state of bewilderment about what's going to happen next. No, I don't mean bewilderment; I mean certainty that they are not going to have quite such a comfortable old age as they have

been expecting, when they get back home—even if home doesn't welcome them with an arrest and a prosecution for misgovernment and peculation.

Pilate isn't likely to be afraid of mere prayers. But he might be feeling it wise to put his clumsy foot down, hard, upon any attempts to open up channels of communication between the big-wigs of the Jerusalem Temple and the lesser lights now running their illicit synagogues in some suburb of Rome. The Jews are—shall I call it supple or subtle?—and Pilate may be suspecting that they have been planning to make me an unsuspecting tool for their intrigues, a channel for messages to Rome.

I am, as I described myself to you when we first met in Cæsarea, a poet and a fool. When I got up to Jerusalem, I paid a visit, by grudging leave from Pilate, to a certain quiet place in the city where I was enquiring about Jewish poetry on behalf of a friend, another fool in Rome. Pilate may have been wondering, ever since, what political subtleties lay behind my apparently literary enquiries. There were none such—Apollo be my witness! I'll ask you to believe *that*, though I may find some difficulty in getting Pilate to believe it. Anyway, I'd like you to know about it, as it may affect my case.

You may have heard of another case which came to a head up in Jerusalem while you were still in Cæsarea, ending in a very different way (I trust!) from the quick release and even compensation which I'm hoping you may secure for me. The Jewish greybeards (with, maybe, my literary friend among them) seem to have been very anxious to push, or to frighten Pilate into giving, a capital sentence such as your Juridical Theory might or might not approve. One of their means to this end was to besiege his Prætorium with a mob of hired vocalists, shouting at him that he must either give the sentence they wanted, or else be accounted (and possibly reported to Rome) as "No friend to Cæsar!" Now do you see the fix in which I may be, owing to my own indiscreet enquiries for poetry, and Pilate's over-heated imagination?

(The man's a pig, but an imaginative kind of pig.)

It may be I who am now doing all the imagining. If ever I get this letter to you, you may have a good laugh at my fancies, take down one of your more sober volumes on Procuratorial powers, make Pilate's prison disgorge, and help me to get away to Rome immediately, before I start imagining even more fantastic things. So be it—as long as you *do* help me to get free. I am already behind time with my journeys, and another fortnight's delay in getting home might mean large holes in certain people's purses—including my own. Trade goes on speeding up these days, and one can't afford to give one's rivals time to get in first.

It's just possible that I'm threatened with something more serious than a fortnight's delay. Not likely, mind you, but possible. It hinges on something I didn't mean to tell you when I started writing. But I have now written myself into something more like a panic, and I'd better change my mind. As I've hinted to you, I had a strange letter from my cousin Procula, a day or two ago, advising me to . . .

I hear the horse-hooves in the street. Also the Centurion's boots stumping up the bottom steps of the stairway. He mustn't find me writing this.

Farewell, till (I trust) we meet in Jerusalem. But . . .

XXV

ORDERS ISSUED TO AN OFFICER OF THE JEWISH
TEMPLE GUARD BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SANHEDRIN.

I. The men accused of Neglect of Duty in the cemetery on the night of 15/16 Nisan, will remain under close arrest. Special precautions will be taken to ensure that they have no communication with each other, or with friends outside.

II. The date of their trial remains unfixed, pending the collection of further evidence, or the discovery of the dead body stolen from the sepulchre.

III. The collection of such evidence is likely to result in additional and more serious charges than those originally preferred against the men in question. Desertion of a watch-post is never a light matter, and in this case there are signs of unusually grave complications.

IV. Every effort should be made in the meantime to obtain, severally, from the men themselves, a more satisfactory account of events on the night in question. It is appreciated that the more ignorant of them may have been unduly influenced by certain unfortunate natural phenomena on the previous day—earthquake tremors, brief solar eclipse, and so forth. This does not excuse the inclusion in an official Guard-report of their ridiculous plea that they were attacked by spirits, demons or similar supernatural assailants. All mention of this plea must be expunged from the final official summary of their case.

V. If any midnight robbery took place, it was undoubtedly made by Galilean undesirables, probably ignorant of the terrain, unlikely to be very numerous, and almost certain to be ill-armed. It is not understood how such opponents could overpower a detachment of fully equipped spearmen from the Temple Guard. When a similar detachment effected an arrest in the Gethsemane area, two nights previously, the opposition was negligible. Among twelve Galilean adherents of the man to be apprehended, there appear to have been only two swords: these confederates not unnaturally took to flight with hardly a blow struck. The mention of the single casualty among those accompanying the Guard (the man MALCHUS) appears to be a highly dubious one, unsupported by subsequent investigation. It is regarded as highly improbable that, two days later, the malcontents would organise any more formidable show of force, especially after the arrest and the execution had undoubtedly dis-

located all their plans for a rising and thoroughly intimidated most of their supporters. The success of a small party in raiding the grave-yard is therefore inexplicable.

In view of these facts, the impending charge of Cowardice may have to be abandoned, and one of Corruption substituted. It has already been suggested at one meeting of the Sanhedrin that the men were bribed to run away, and leave the Tomb unguarded. Future developments are likely to increase this suspicion, and harden it into a formal resolution that the men should be compelled to confess to a corrupt bargain with the Galilean malcontents.

VI. During the above-mentioned collection of further evidence there must be no relaxation of precautions prohibiting public access to the site of the incident. Several Councillors have commented on the size and improper demeanour of the crowds which frequently collect on the outskirts of the cemetery. Such crowds will in future be dispersed, and prevented from re-assembling. There must meanwhile be no possibility of any tampering with the seals on the doorway of the Tomb, any entry of unauthorised persons, or displacement of objects which might lead to further evidence of the nature of the outrage. The Sanhedrin is determined to use all means to discover what happened at the Sepulchre on the night of the 15/16. Everything must remain exactly as it was at sunrise next morning.

VII. You will be held personally responsible for the exact execution of this and all previous orders. No plea of negligence, disobedience or corruption among the lower ranks of the Guard will be accepted in extenuation. You are also warned that your prospects of future promotion, or, indeed, of retaining your present rank, will be largely dependent on the present matter being settled in a manner satisfactory to the Sanhedrin.

Signed by the Rabbi Josias ben-Joachim,
President-by-rote for the third
week of Nisan.

XXVI

SECRET LETTER. UNDATED. FROM THE LADY HERODIAS, TEMPORARILY AT SEBASTE, SAMARIA, TO HER SECOND HUSBAND, THE TETRARCH HEROD ANTIPAS, IN JERUSALEM.

I HAVE received your lordship's letter, asking why I left, or rather was leaving, Jerusalem. It appears to have been written while we were still in our Palace there, making our quiet preparations for departure. Your lordship must have hired new spies among my personal servants, to replace those whom I recently detected and dismissed.

This letter will make clear my reasons for departure. If, as you imply, you wish me to return, I must also make clear that I no longer regard my husband's wishes as sufficient reason for doing anything I am disinclined to do myself.

I suppose I must believe you when you tell me that these Passover-visits to Jerusalem, often inconvenient and always tedious, are a political necessity. I can only point out that it would be easy to find other and less irksome means of rebutting slander against the racial purity and ceremonial orthodoxy of Herod's House. The only difficulty arises from certain well-founded allegations against the minor branch of that House into which it has been my misfortune to marry.

My own parents and grandparents were unimpeachably Jewish, in descent as well as faith: your mother was undeniably a Samaritan. As I travelled here through Samaria, and observed its inhabitants, I ceased to wonder why true-born Jews spit upon Samaritans; I only asked myself why they did not spit more frequently and more violently. I wish you could have seen the swarms of beggars that crowded

round my litter, howling for alms, every time my men put its legs to the ground in any Samaritan village!

It is one thing to pay a short visit to Jerusalem at Passover, in order to combat evil-speaking about the beggar-taint in my husband's blood. It is quite another to remain there, quite unnecessarily, after having faced and endured the boredom of the so-called festivities.

I am rather happier to be at Sebaste, and (may I add?) a good deal happier for not having to share a roof with my husband.

You can regard this journey of mine, if you like, as a first stage in a formal return to our Tetrarchy of Galilee, further north. I had other reasons for the move, and you will learn something about them by reading through this letter, as I hope you will have the courtesy to do. But, officially speaking, the Lady Herodias is merely pausing here on her return journey to the Galilee where she is—or ought to be—the Queen. Anyone but you would long ago have repudiated this comic invention of a long-dead Roman Emperor, this meaningless and ridiculous title of 'Tetrarch'. A better man would have made himself King, and laid the queenly crown at my feet. At any rate I am loved, honoured and obeyed by our subjects in Galilee, as I cannot hope to be in Judæa—so long as you make yourself the laughing-stock of Jerusalem, by your weakness, your sloth, and your toadying to Roman officials. I have left Jerusalem largely because I do not enjoy watching you grovel on the doorstep of the Prætorium, while Her Majesty Queen Procula reigns over the society of a city where my grandfather was King indeed. Herod the Great knew how to obtain Roman troops for his splendid purposes, how to lead Roman officials by the nose until he did obtain them. You only lick their boots—and obtain nothing!

Do not tell me you are his son. Samaritan women are clever at tricking their husbands, and you have never yet shown a spark of Herod's spirit.

Have you forgotten what he did when his prestige was, I will not say challenged, but distantly threatened, by some crazy astronomers spreading an old wives' tale in Bethlehem about a babe born to be King? He did not 'notify' Roman authorities in Jerusalem, through the official channels, nor write a whining letter to Rome (as you'd probably write one to Capri) asking for his own royal claims to be officially re-asserted. He sent spearmen straight to Bethlehem, and blotted out the rival claimant along with some scores of other brats—just to make it plain that Herod the Great was a *man*, as well as King of the Jews. I am tied to an apologetic Tetrarch of Galilee who will not even let his wife teach him manhood.

You have heard all this before, and deserved it. You may wonder what it is that has driven me to leave our Jerusalem Palace, instead of staying there and continuing my heart-breaking efforts to put a backbone into you. I might say two things, though they are so closely connected as almost to make one. You are probably too lazy, and allow yourself to remain too ill-informed, to appreciate the connection. I will put them to you separately.

I heard that Pontius Pilate has now decided to season the rebuffs and humiliations he has recently heaped upon you, by issuing, forsooth, an imperial invitation to both of us to dine at his *Prætorium*. Past experience taught me that you were only too likely to accept it behind my back, so that I might look a fool, whether I went or not. I should certainly feel a fool—or the wife of a fool—if I accompanied you there, and sat at the second or, probably, third table, while that woman *Procula* presided patronisingly over the first. I would gladly make a much longer journey than this one I have taken through Samaria, in order to avoid an evening of such degradation.

I am told, by the way (while you spy so meanly on me, I must have trustworthy friends and informants in your wing of the Palace), I am told that Pilate had the insolence to

include my daughter Salome in his invitation. In case you had any plan for jockeying her into attending, I had better remind you that she is my daughter but not yours. She is child of the worthier husband I madly left for you. She is certainly not at the beck and call of every Roman with whom you may wish to ingratiate yourself.

It did not take me long to learn that all this talk of a 'reconciliation' with Pilate started with something that happened at the Palace on Friday morning, while I was away at the baths for the communal Passover purification. I myself should use the word 're-humiliation'. Pilate sent you a criminal whom he or the Sanhedrin had arrested, a Galilean, from the Tetrarchy you pretend to govern by Roman permission. You tamely sent the man back, for Pilate to crucify—and then sat and preened yourself on having curried a little more favour with Rome.

The man was actually in your power, handed over to your own Palace Guards. He was a Galilean, officially, subject to your jurisdiction. You could not even think of an excuse for keeping him safe. We have dungeons, haven't we? We only needed a day or two, at most a week or two, in order to find out more about him. All that you had found out was that he had done a few quack-cures and conjuring-tricks in Galilee. When he refused to do one for you in Jerusalem (a wandering beggar refusing to obey the lord of Galilee!), you tamely sent him back to the Prætorium and started blubbering about 'reconciliation'. If I'd been in charge of the business, and *compelled* to send him back, I'd have seen that he reached the Prætorium in small slices, after some spectacular form of death in our Palace courtyard.

Too late to think of that now. Not too late to find out more about him, as I've been doing, and to act on what I've learnt.

Do you know who he was? I suppose it would mean nothing to you if I said that he came from Nazareth. Will

you pay a little more attention when I tell you that he was once hand-in-glove with that creature John, the one who got himself called Baptist?

I can almost see your face as you read this. I can almost hear you repeating that infuriating sneer of yours, "Oh, woman, woman!" That's what you did when I first told you that John had got to be thrown into gaol. That's what you went on doing, every time I insisted that you must have his head off. If it hadn't been for Salome dancing a little—and you drinking too much—that's probably what you would still be doing, with John still snug in prison, or, more likely, released by your clemency in the hope of a 'reconciliation' with some sect of unwashed fanatics. Let me tell you, once and for all, it wasn't just a 'woman' that kept on telling you what to do with John, what you know now was the right thing to do. It was a lady of Herod's Royal House: a Princess who has inherited ten times more of his courage, to say nothing of his wisdom, than you have shown in your whole disappointing career. I didn't, and I don't, care a bronze penny whether or no the man had preached against me as immoral. I may have been unwise to leave Salome's father and get into your dull bed, but at least my moral conscience is perfectly clear—perfectly! I can snap my fingers at all the half-naked Baptists in your Tetrarchy. Divorce is perfectly well-recognised nowadays, perfectly moral. They say that in Rome it's quite unfashionable *not* to have been divorced. I'm a citizeness of the world, the world of today, and I don't feel the least resentment against poor fools who preach old-fangled sermons against me. There was no question of feminine spite, or any other kind of spite. I had no *personal* feeling against John, none whatever! Please get that into your head. Not one jot!

You'll probably say now that I am protesting too much. One has to—in order to make men of your kind listen, let alone believe the truth. And it is the Truth. All that talk of spite was lies. Just lies!

The man was dangerous, politically dangerous to all in authority. Particularly to your authority in Galilee. Also to my hopes (if they were only more than hopes!) of ruling, one day, over some such Kingdom as the great Herod governed and enjoyed. I knew it at the time, though I could not put my finger on the exact spot where the danger was gathering. It was a question of instinct, woman's instinct, which was difficult to support with words and reasons. It needs no support now. I made you behead him, and Time has proved me right.

Fools and fanatics called John a prophet. He had a different way of describing himself. He said he was a herald. Herald, if you please, to a King! He was preparing sword and crown for some friend of his, conveniently kept in the background until the right moment to stop sermons and start rebellion. That was what I felt then, and know now. That was why, whenever you refused me John's head, I seemed to hear my grandfather turning in his grave.

Pilate probably imagines that he has put a stop to rebellion by crucifying the new claimant (yes, it was apparently for this Nazarene that John had laid his evil plots). I gather the claim was made public ten days ago, and there was some sort of triumphal entry into the city. The man himself seems to have been rather timid about assuming any royal title, but his followers either egged him on, or claimed for him what he hadn't the courage and enterprise to claim for himself. I don't know if Pilate sent you any of the evidence, on the famous morning when you had him in your grasp and then let go. There seems to have been enough of it to convince Pilate that there was a rebellion hatching—sedition anyway—and real danger to Cæsar's authority in this country. Let there be, and plenty of it! It astounds me that a man of your brains—I've never denied that you have brains even if you lack heart and stomach—could not see how this man, properly managed, could be used for frightening Pilate.

Fear will screw out of Pilate twenty times as much as you'll ever get by gestures of 'reconciliation'. A claimant to kingship could be manipulated in ways that might bring down all Roman authority in Judæa, after you'd made it weaken itself by its own concessions. Don't tell me that our own authority depends on that of Rome. That's what the Sadducees sit telling each other in the Sanhedrin, with their incomes, not their royal power, at stake. Your power may now depend entirely on that of Rome. It will continue to do so until you take a line of your own and summon up allies. Even alliance with a mob can put one's opponents in quite ugly predicaments, and this Nazarene had more than mobs at his back. Begin sapping and mining, instead of waving flags of truce and 'reconciliation'. The time to begin is Now.

Too late, you'll say? Even if this Nazarene once had a powerful secret organisation to back him, it will have been crumpled up by his death? Listen. Within the last few days (my men work quickly) I've collected information which seems to point to an extremely powerful secret organisation, a regular network spreading from Cæsarea Philippi, right up in the north of our Galilee, to places in southern Judæa such as Kerioth, 50 miles beyond Jerusalem, where one of his followers called Judas came from. There must have been depots half-way, even here among the Samaritans. I have positive evidence from local people that he made a rendezvous with a Samaritan woman out by Jacob's well, and that half the population of Sychem came streaming out to swear allegiance to him. That's the kind of man you had under your thumb last Friday, and sent back to Pilate. You might have suggested to him (after he'd been put through the proper stages of preparation in the dungeons) that it should not be difficult to persuade the people of Sychem to swear allegiance to a real Prince whose mother was a Samaritan! There must be fifty thousand Samaritans between Galilee and Judæa, and I doubt if Pilate can count three thousand in all his cohorts.

Too late? Listen again. The man is not dead. I've told you what I think of this Roman business of crucifying people—not half as entertaining to watch as some of my grandfather's methods. Not a quarter as safe as a simple beheading. Rescue-parties aside, there are so many chances of a miscarriage. There was a man the Romans nailed up beside the Jericho road, on the edge of the desert gorges, and forgot to guard properly; the wolves came up and ate his feet off, but he was still alive next morning. Men can hang three and four days, and still live to be a nuisance to the Romans—or useful to their own native Prince! A threat of a second dose of Cross might make him play the latter part, with very little hesitation.

I haven't had all the details yet, so I am not quite sure what actually happened to this man. I gather there was an order that he must be taken down before the sunset that begins Passover; that means he cannot have been nailed up for more than a few hours. It seems there were drugs passed up to him, possibly to give an appearance of death. I am trying to find out how much money was passed to the centurion in charge of the squad. It might need a big sum, with a whole military career at stake. But there was at least one very rich man publicly sympathising, a stringy old Jew called Joseph of Arimathea—beside Heaven knows how many intriguing with him in secret. He was hidden—one can hardly say buried—in a tomb belonging to this Joseph. That seems to me suspicious, to begin with. And by mid-day on Sunday he was gone, without a trace left. But he has been seen, and recognised, in Jerusalem, and once, they say, out at Emmaus, six miles off. I am taking no notice of the Wheres and Whens of this story. It all comes from his followers and partisans, who are probably doing all they can to throw dust into the eyes of Pilate and the Sanhedrin. They'll throw none into mine.

I'm getting frequent reports. I thought it much wiser to come out here, because when I am in Jerusalem I cannot

send a slave-girl to market to buy radishes without somebody's spies (not only yours!) following her there and back. I cannot write a line to my perfumers without wondering whether or not it will turn up on Pilate's desk at the Prætorium next morning—or among Procula's hair-dyes.

This letter goes to you between the two soles of Salome's left sandal. And Salome goes to Jerusalem in a litter surrounded by fifty of the Idumean Guard, whom even Pilate would find it difficult to bribe. It'll get to you safely—but will it induce you, for once, to *act*? That is, in essence, the question that has overshadowed my whole life for years—the life of a gazelle tied by her graceful back-leg to a clumsy tortoise. I loved you once. I once thought you were a man. I only go on living in hope that one day there may be another conjuror's trick, which will enable me to lead you, or train you, or goad you, into being some kind of King.

A strange thought strikes me. Even a short stay here, at Sebaste, reminds me that there are pleasant towns in Jewry, many places where a new King could make his new capital. It might be politic to do so. Most of the present places are played-out, or far too large, and too independent, for Kings who want to govern a whole country from them—all Herod's wide domain! The Nazarene may be timid, but he was no fool—even at politics. They say here that when he was talking to the woman I spoke of, she asked him the stale old question which has kept Jews and Samaritans so long at loggerheads—whether one should look to the Jerusalem Temple, or to this local place on Mount Gerizim. And apparently he said that everyone would soon be worshipping God (I suppose he meant worshipping himself) 'neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem'. It's worth thinking over. You know my opinion of that wretched place you built for us at Sepphoris (not that there's much choice in Galilee!) And I shall never be happy in Jerusalem while it

still smells of Procula—which, for me, will be years after she's driven out of it! A new King and Queen could make their new capital wherever they chose.

Wait till I come, and we'll discuss all this. No hurry about the new city. If you have any really reliable men, who can keep their tongues still, put them on to the business of discovering the man's present whereabouts. And (this may help) tell them to discover, while they are about it, exactly what did happen at the tomb.

XXVII

REPORT ON NO. XXVI ABOVE. EVIDENTLY
ADDRESSED TO THE PROCURATOR, PONTIUS
PILATE, FROM SOME OFFICIAL IN THE JERUSALEM
PRÆTORIUM.

COPY of letter intercepted between Sebaste and Jerusalem and submitted for His Excellency's inspection. As tedious and repetitive as similar letters, previously intercepted.

Another hare-brained scheme for advancing her husband's supposed interests, apparently against his will. The Tetrarch Herod will presumably be shrewd enough to dismiss it to the same Limbo as her previous plans. Women are often inconvenient in politics, seldom a serious danger. The immortal gods have not given the Lady Herodias sufficient physical charms to fit her for the part of even a minor Cleopatra: one of the few sentences in her letter which lightens the general tedium of reading it is that in which she compares herself to a gazelle.

Her political capacity can be sufficiently gauged in a previous passage in which she suggests matching undisciplined villagers (armed, presumably, with wood-choppers and carving-knives) against the trained legionaries of Rome.

Almost as inept is her notion of getting Jews and Samaritans to co-operate for any purpose whatever.

References to the past history of this country, showing strong family-bias, indicate a complete lack of grasp upon the present-day situation. His Divine Majesty's increasing consolidation of Imperial power means (praise Heaven!) that the days of petty kingships is past.

The question stated at the end, 'What happened at the tomb?' may prove to be of some slight importance. But it is unlikely that any light will be thrown on the matter by her ladyship's investigations, or any further letters of hers which may be intercepted.

It becomes increasingly clear, from this and other sources, that her ladyship is kept in complete ignorance of all the really effective and possibly dangerous plots of her husband the Tetrarch. These are mentioned elsewhere, particularly the intrigue with certain Persians, and their present Parthian overlord, on which we had the honour to report to your Excellency last week. If the Tetrarch Herod is indeed seeking a royal crown, it is by means of Parthian arrows, not her ladyship's perfumes.

The obtaining of this copy of her latest letter was a troublesome and costly business, barely justified by results; it involved a large sum of money paid out to one of the lady Salome's waiting-maids (nominally for other favours solicited) by our agent at Gophna, where a Herodian convoy from Sebaste was halted for the night.

May we discontinue interceptions, and save further outlay?

We await your Excellency's orders.

XXVIII

EXTRACT FROM DIARY. WRITTEN BY THE MERCHANT PHRAATASH, DURING HIS RETURN JOURNEY THROUGH PALESTINE AND SYRIA TO HIS HOME IN CYROPOLIS (THE MODERN KURUSHPUR, IN PERSIA. THAT COUNTRY WAS, IN A.D. 31, DOMINATED BY THE SOMEWHAT UNCIVILISED BUT EXTREMELY WARLIKE INHABITANTS OF ITS OWN PARTHIAN PROVINCE. CONTEMPORARY RECORDS MAKE LITTLE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PARTHIA AND PERSIA).

I FIND I have written but little lately in this journal, which I swore to myself to keep weekly. There are barely six entries since I crossed the great river, leaving the dominion of the King of Kings, the Lord of Persia who will soon be Lord of all the World.

I cannot blame myself overmuch. There has been little worthy of record. Measures and prices I must keep ever in mind, unwritten, lest I bring myself and my house to beggary and dishonour. What else beside its merchandise has the West to offer to us of the enlightenment?

This city of Jerusalem is again in turmoil. It awaits the hour of peace, when it will be once more subject to the King of Kings, so that the Judæans here can know the same security as those in the Jewries of Susa and Persepolis.

Maybe that hour draws near. There is talk of War. I have found it prudent to lodge here obscurely, among others who have no wish that the Romans should know of their whereabouts.

I took oath with myself to make no bargain for sending horses to the Romans. It is not right to supply the enemies of the King of Kings with that which alone might help them

to delay his conquest. I doubt whether there was need of any oath. When I spoke last year with the Roman captains in Syria, promising them gold for the eagle-standards of their legions, I perceived that they have not yet learnt that victory gallops upon four hooves, shooting or trampling down all that plods on foot with shield and sword. I saw the many thousands of Roman bones that still lie whitening near Carrhæ, where Crassus and his plodders were destroyed by the horsemen of the King of Kings. Soon other fields will be white, nearer Jerusalem, and perhaps nearer Rome.

There is much madness here, as among all above whom hovers bloodshed and conquest. I hear stories, in this lodging-house, of preachings, and miracles, and the like folly. One man speaks of a dead body risen from a tomb, and I keep silence, letting him speak. We of the faith know that the body is evil, as all Matter is evil, and that once the Spirit quits it, it must at once wither and stink into corruption. So spake Zarathustra, and all things give strengthening to his words.

Another man here told me (such is the madness of the West!) that Ormuzd, that God himself, had come down to visit Jerusalem. I broke silence at that, maybe unwisely. It is seldom wise to offer Freedom to men boasting of the chains that bind them to Error. I told him that the Greek Alexander had called himself God, until Persia brought him to his untimely end. I told him that in Egypt I had seen a temple which fools began to build to their god Anthony (doubtless with another for the goddess Cleopatra), where other fools now make sacrifice to the god called Augustus Cæsar, by whom Anthony was slain. He looked at me amazed, as though I, not he, were mad. Those who dwell in the cities of Error think Truth a worthless merchandise.

I am impatient to be once more in the dominions of the King of Kings, where I need not for ever fetter my tongue, but can traffic and talk with men of discernment.

Here all men, openly or in secret, hate the mastery of

Rome: yet they wildly hope to be masters of themselves, blind to the ruin that their own quarrels would bring upon their homes. When our prince Pakorsh captured Jerusalem, he had the help of Labienus and other Roman traitors, who came to us past the curtain of iron which sunders us from them, crossing Euphrates in order willingly to sell their western world to ours. Today it would be as easy to purchase such help, but there would be less need to do so. Indeed, if the King of Kings holds back too long his horsemen, they may come here to find a land already stripped and plundered by its own inhabitants, Jerusalem laid in ashes by a war she has brought upon herself.

If I leave the city tomorrow, as I purpose, I can make swift journey to Damash and beyond. I shall not return empty-handed, if I can reach the great river before war has come. Some of my gain was made by promises of merchandise from Kurushpur, and war cancels all promises.

May the King of Kings make war swiftly upon the corrupting body that is called Rome, the corrupted slaves over whom Rome has set her Proconsul in Damash, her Procurator in Jerusalem!

XXIX

VERBATIM REPORT OF PART OF AN ENQUIRY CONDUCTED BY A SMALL COMMITTEE OF THE SANHEDRIN. IT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ORIGINALLY ANNEXED TO A FULLER REPORT ON THE WHOLE ENQUIRY, BUT KEPT SEPARATE IN THE ARCHIVES, FOR TWO GOOD REASONS. JOANNA, UNLIKE THE OTHER WITNESSES, HAD NOT BEEN SUMMONED TO GIVE EVIDENCE, BUT VOLUNTEERED TO GIVE IT OF HER OWN ACCORD. SECONDLY, BOTH HER TESTIMONY AND THAT OF JACOB (WHO HAD BEEN SUMMONED, BUT CLEARLY UNDER A MISAPPREHENSION) WERE IN DIRECT AND SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSING CONTRADICTION TO THAT OF ALL THE OTHER WITNESSES.

THE ABOVE-NAMED COMMITTEE APPEARS TO HAVE CONSISTED OF THREE UNEQUALLY-MATCHED MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN: RABBI ADAIAH BEN-DANIEL, ALREADY MENTIONED IN DOCUMENT NO. 10 : RABBI GAMALIEL BEN-SIMEON, KNOWN TO US IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (ACTS. V.34.): AND A PRESIDING JUDGE, WHOSE NAME IS NOT GIVEN IN THE EXTRACT.

The Verbatim Report (on the examination of the two witnesses) begins as follows:

GAMALIEL: Your name is Joanna?

JOANNA: Yes, Your Reverence.

GAMALIEL: Your husband's name is Chuzah?

JOANNA: Yes, in Galilee. They speak a lot of Greek there.

Here in Jerusalem, when he came courting me, I used to call him Hosea.

ADAI AH (*to the Clerk of the Court*): You need not write that down. The point is irrelevant.

(It is interesting to note that the Clerk apparently disobeyed these instructions, and wrote down the irrelevancy.)

GAMALIEL: He acts as Steward to the Lord Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee?

JOANNA: Yes. Here, in the Jerusalem Palace.

ADAI AH: But you are a Galilean?

JOANNA: No, Your Reverence. I am born Judæan.

GAMALIEL: Your age?

JOANNA: 42.

ADAI AH: Why have you come here?

JOANNA: To speak the truth. They told me at the Palace that Your Reverences were seeking to find out the truth.

ADAI AH: They were right. But what made you presume to think that you could assist your betters in such a search?

JOANNA: . . . (No answer).

THE PRESIDENT: The Rabbi asked you what brought you here. What information have you to offer?

JOANNA: So please Your Reverence, I helped to bury him. I went back, the day after next, and——

ADAI AH: One moment, please! . . . Of whom are you speaking? Whom did you help to bury?

JOANNA: Him that you did to death.

ADAI AH: Silence, woman! My Lord President, I must protest against such insolent language being permitted! I suggest it immediately stamps this witness as one of those who are circulating the lying rumours we are commissioned to dispel.

GAMALIEL: I do not think the witness intended any insolence. And we are commissioned to discover the truth.

ADAI AH: From creatures like this?

GAMALIEL: From any of God's creatures to whom He may have revealed even a jot or tittle of truth.

ADALIAH: The woman accuses us of murder. Is that truth, or is it vile and rebellious slander?

GAMALIEL (*after a pause*): That is not the subject of the present enquiry. Nor has she used the word 'murder'. You put it into her mouth.

ADALIAH: It was in her heart already! Rabbi Gamaliel has reminded us that we are all God's creatures, even women of this kind. May I remind him in return that, though He first created us, some of us are re-made, and marred, by the cunning of the Devil? May I also remind him that the Devil has been unusually active in Jerusalem during the last few weeks?

GAMALIEL: You are right. And is still active.

THE PRESIDENT: Your Reverences will please keep to the business in hand.

ADALIAH: If the business in hand is to take evidence from one who has clearly volunteered it in order to abuse and mislead us——

THE PRESIDENT: Please examine the witness.

ADALIAH: I can only protest that——!

THE PRESIDENT: Brother Gamaliel.

GAMALIEL (*to JOANNA*): You spoke of a burial. How did you come to have a hand in it?

JOANNA: Please Your Reverence, I'd known him a long time. Nigh on two years. And when he came to Jerusalem, this Passover——

ADALIAH: You met him in Galilee?

JOANNA: Yes. When my husband was summoned to Sepphoris, to the King's other Palace.

THE PRESIDENT: King?

GAMALIEL: I think the witness means His Highness the Tetrarch Herod.

ADALIAH: She had better watch her tongue.

GAMALIEL (*to JOANNA*): Can you describe this first meeting that you have mentioned? Did the man come to the Tetrarch's Palace?

JOANNA: No, Your Reverence. We'd gone to him, across the hills. We were near the Lake, among fishermen. I think it was at Capernaum.

ADAI AH: Think? Surely you must know where you first joined these . . . this gang of Galileans?

THE PRESIDENT: If the Steward was sent on the business of the Tetrarchy, it is more likely to have been to Tiberias.

JOANNA: No, Your Worship. It wasn't on business. He went to take *me*. I'd been ill, seemingly. Not right, here, in the head. Possessed, as we call it, by some kind of devil. I'd borne him a child, and lost her within the week. No one's quite the same, just after a thing like that. That's why I can't remember, not properly, exactly what did happen. My husband heard that folk were being cured of such things, hundreds of them, down in the lake villages. I can't be sure which village we went to. I said Capernaum just now, but I rather think it was Magdala. Afterwards, when he had cured me, we had to go straight back, up into the hills and across to Sepphoris again. I remember that, clear enough. And I remember *him*.

ADAI AH: You say you were cured of madness?

JOANNA: I couldn't rightly call it that. I just don't know. I'm only sure there was some that was far worse than me, and he cured them, too. Seven devils he cast out of one woman. There was something wrong with me, after my baby died. If you'd ever been through the same as I had, Your Reverence, you couldn't doubt that he——

ADAI AH: I am not doubting that you were deranged, woman. I am only doubting whether you have ever been cured! . . . My Lord President, I am happy to withdraw any of my former observations which may have irritated the Rabbi Gamaliel. The woman is clearly an object for our pity rather than our suspicions. She should never have been called as a witness.

THE PRESIDENT: She was not called. I am at some loss to know how she came to appear in this Court.

GAMALIEL: I cannot allow that Rabbi Adaiah has proved her testimony to be useless to us. Are we to reject all statements which do not immediately confirm those of the first witnesses whom the Sanhedrin picked out for summons?

ADAIAH: They were at least sane! This woman and her friends are obviously in a different category.

GAMALIEL: Nothing is obvious until it is proved.

THE PRESIDENT: The Rabbi Adaiah is certainly a little out of order in speaking of this woman's 'friends', still more of a 'gang', as he did just now, without specifying persons—and names.

ADAIAH: I know some names, Your Reverence. I have been at pains to investigate the spread of disaffection among the Galileans now frequenting Jerusalem.

GAMALIEL: Yet you do not wish to continue your investigations by allowing this woman to answer our questions?

ADAIAH: I will ask her one myself—if the President will allow me to take up the challenge thrown in my face!

THE PRESIDENT: You may proceed.

ADAIAH (to JOANNA): You spoke of another . . . patient, out of whom seven devils were said to have been cast. May we know her name?

JOANNA: . . . (No answer).

ADAIAH: Was it, by any chance, Mary?

JOANNA: Yes.

ADAIAH: From Magdala—Magdala in Galilee?

JOANNA: Yes.

ADAIAH: And this woman, this former lunatic—I will not offend the ears of Your Reverences by mentioning the course of life which brought on her affliction—she is now in Jerusalem, or was so a few days ago?

JOANNA: Yes.

ADAIAH: Can you tell the Court anything of her present whereabouts?

JOANNA: Please Your Reverences, I'd rather not do that.

ADAIAH: Exactly! You'd rather not! But she was a member

of this burial-party which you joined on Friday evening?

JOANNA: . . . Yes.

ADAIAH: And she was one of those sent to the tomb again, very early in the morning, on the day after the Sabbath?

JOANNA: Please, there was no sending of us. We just went. With the proper spices, and so on. What we used on the Friday night had been just for the time—till Sabbath was over and we could buy all we wanted.

ADAIAH: Yes, yes, yes! Please do not waste our time with irrelevant details! May I remind the President of the Court that we have another witness to examine today, and that we have barely an hour before the Evening Sacrifice?

THE PRESIDENT: I am fully aware of it. What information are you trying to elicit from this witness?

ADAIAH: I wish to know whether this woman from Magdala was one of the party which visited the cemetery.

THE PRESIDENT (to JOANNA): You hear the question?

JOANNA: Yes . . . Yes. She came with us.

ADAIAH: Ah!

GAMALIEL: And what did you find when you reached the tomb?

ADAIAH: Really, Your Reverence, is that question necessary? Naturally—they found nothing.

GAMALIEL: And you are entirely convinced that that was—natural?

ADAIAH: Entirely! At an earlier stage of this enquiry it was sufficiently established that the tomb had been rifled during the course of the night, the dead body removed, and nothing left to indicate——

GAMALIEL: Nothing?

JOANNA: Please Your Reverences, his grave-clothes——

ADAIAH: Be silent, woman! You were only admitted here to answer questions, not to interrupt your betters. . . . I was about to observe that the tomb had been designedly left empty by the rascals who raided it at midnight. Soon after sunrise, again according to plan, a pack of half-crazy

women were sent to visit it, among them a well-known prostitute from Galilee. These poor creatures, dupes of the principal conspirators, then returned to the city and started spreading their blasphemous gossip among other dupes. I have already urged, in vain, the arrest and punishment of the principal rumour-mongers. If my advice had been taken, we should have been spared all this confusion of thought. We are only increasing the trouble, and perhaps the danger, by accepting the testimony volunteered by this woman—possibly in furtherance of the plot. We shall certainly learn nothing by allowing her to proceed.

GAMALIEL: Nothing? You are still sure of that?

ADAI AH: If I have not yet made it clear——!

GAMALIEL: Rabbi Adai ah has made it abundantly clear that he had convinced *himself* of the uselessness of today's proceedings. I myself think it possible that the whole Enquiry, conducted as it has been conducted, may prove quite useless, for any good purpose. Nevertheless, we are under orders from the Sanhedrin to persevere with any proceedings which may throw light on the question of what happened at the sepulchre. I submit to the President that further examination of this witness may well throw some such light, and that to dismiss her, at this stage, is to lose a possible opportunity of obtaining information.

ADAI AH: I hope the Clerk is taking full note of these proceedings! Rabbi Gamaliel first impugns the good sense of the Sanhedrin by suggesting that it has ordered a useless Enquiry, and then attempts to prove his point by insisting on the obviously useless examination of a witness who is not on the list of those we were commissioned to summon. I do not see how obstruction could go further.

THE PRESIDENT: You put me in a difficult position. I was certainly not commissioned to preside over a controversy between two reverend Councillors, which now shows signs of degenerating into an unseemly wrangle.

ADAI AH: It is I who have been put in a difficult position—an

impossible one! I must protest against the word 'unseemly' being applied to my most reasonable submission that certain evidence is inadmissible.

THE PRESIDENT: I am inclined to be on your side, Rabbi Adalah. But I think that it would be more seemly if the matter was thrashed out in the absence of the witness herself—and of the recording Clerk. Unless you have any objection to raise, I shall now dismiss both of them. We can then discuss, in private, what was the policy of the Sanhedrin in ordering this Enquiry, and whether or no it can be forwarded by taking further testimony from this witness.

ADALAH: And the Evening Sacrifice?

THE PRESIDENT: I shall certainly attend. If necessary we must postpone the examination of the second witness until tomorrow. Let me see, what was his name?

CLERK: Jacob ben-Joseph. Of Nazareth.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, yes. Will you warn him, as you go out, that he will probably be required tomorrow?

No further objections being raised, the witness Joanna was dismissed from Court, and the recording Clerk instructed to withdraw.

(There is naturally no record of the ensuing interview between the three Rabbis. It seems as if Adalah had his way. No further testimony was apparently taken from the woman Joanna.

The second part of the document refers to the examination, next day, of the witness called Jacob. It seems quite clear that this is the 'James, brother of the Lord' mentioned in the Gospels and Acts [where, of course, he is also called Jacob], and traditionally believed to be the writer of the Epistle General of James. It therefore seemed best to print his name in its [strange] Anglicised form.)

ADALAH: Your name is Jacob ben-Joseph?

JAMES: Yes.

ADALAH: From Nazareth in Galilee?

JAMES: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Am I right in supposing that you are brother to the other son of Joseph, the man executed for blasphemy last Friday?

JAMES: Quite right. There were four of us, beside the girls. He and myself, then Simon and Jude. He was named Jude in spite of being born in Galilee.

THE PRESIDENT: We are not interested in your family tree! Nor in Galilean nomenclature. You have been summoned to give such testimony as you can about certain recent happenings in the cemetery outside the west gate of Jerusalem.

ADALAH (to JAMES): You must excuse his lordship's very natural impatience on the subject of irrelevancy. A great deal of our time was wasted last night by a witness who thrust herself upon us, and proceeded to tell us a great number of things which were entirely off the point. (To THE PRESIDENT): I am sure that this man, by what I have heard of him, will prove to be a much more satisfactory witness.

JAMES: I shall be very glad to say what I can.

ADALAH: Are you well acquainted with the dead man's personal followers?

JAMES: Very imperfectly. I always refused to join them. I have done some business with the man called Andrew, down by the Lake. Like many others, I used to pay my dues, when I was in Tiberias, to the one called Matthew, until he threw up his post there. I knew nothing of their plans, little of the doctrine they were spreading in Galilee—until a few days ago.

ADALAH: You were wise! The rogues or dupes who were privy to all your brother's schemes have been, or should be, summoned here, not to give information, but to receive reprimand or punishment.

JAMES: I know that my brother was disliked by most of the rich men and nearly all the Teachers, both here in Jerusalem and at home in Galilee. On his first visit here, when he was only twelve, and my mother was looking after us younger ones on the journey back, he was missing for some hours. She returned to the Temple to find him disputing with the Scribes or Lawyers, and astonishing them by his learning. Perhaps, even then, 20 years ago, his forwardness began to make him enemies among the priests.

ADAIAH: By all we have heard, he made enemies in his own village, even his own family!

JAMES: It is true that he was not accepted in Nazareth, and won no followers there. He himself quoted our old saying, that no prophet is honoured in his own country.

ADAIAH: Nor by his own brothers?

JAMES: We were Nazarenes. We had been brought up in the same home. It was difficult for Nazareth to accept as teacher the son of the village carpenter. It was difficult for us four to believe that our elder brother could be the Messiah.

ADAIAH: So he made that blasphemous claim to you, too? You were certainly wise to keep away from him and his followers.

JAMES: My mother believed in him from the first, though we often thought that he spoke almost slightly of her, as he did of us.

ADAIAH: A scoffer, even, at the sacred ties of kinship!

JAMES: He was always insistent that such ties must not bind a man too closely, and hamper him when God called him to difficult or dangerous work. I see now that he was right. Now that it is too late.

GAMALIEL: Too late?

JAMES: I cannot help regretting that I, who had opportunities denied to most men, made no use of them whatever.

ADAI AH: Beware what you say, man! You would do well, in our presence, to keep such regrets to yourself.

THE PRESIDENT: Let him proceed, Rabbi. I would like to hear when and why this man began to change his mind about his brother's claims.

JAMES: . . . I can say When more easily than Why. God has compelled me to look at all things with new eyes during these last few days in Jerusalem. I did not stand, as my mother did, beneath the Cross to which the Romans nailed him. But I heard that night how, as he hung dying, he entrusted her to the care of a man from Capernaum named John. Not even a kinsman. Not even a Nazarene. He was right to do so, after the way we had disbelieved in him, and even mocked at him. The knowledge that he was right wounded my mind the more sorely.

ADAI AH: I must protest against this evidence being given to the Court. It is entirely irrelevant to our purpose, and——

GAMALIEL: Yes, to *your* purpose!

ADAI AH: If the President wishes to encourage——

THE PRESIDENT: I do not wish to encourage undignified bickering between the members of the Court! Rabbi Gamaliel was at fault to speak as he did.

GAMALIEL: I will withdraw my words. I spoke in haste, and in anger.

ADAI AH: I cannot understand what is for ever moving you to anger during this Enquiry.

GAMALIEL: No. You cannot understand. . . . But I would like to know more clearly what kind of testimony it is that we seek, and what kind we can reject as irrelevant.

ADAI AH: We are commissioned to discover the facts about certain alleged happenings in the cemetery.

GAMALIEL: If you yourself would restrict your questions to those happenings, I would the more willingly——

THE PRESIDENT: Rabbi Gamaliel, I must warn you again not to provoke unnecessary rancours by your manner of speech! Rabbi Adai ah is right in saying that we have too

often wandered away from the main points at issue. Do not let us waste more time by trying to put the blame for this upon each other. Let us rather return to straight questions upon the matter in hand, in the hope of getting straight answers from the witnesses.

ADAI AH: Yes, but——

THE PRESIDENT: Rabbi Adai ah, you will please be ruled by me! I preside here. Perhaps it would be best if I were to put the relevant questions myself.

ADAI AH: As Your Reverence pleases.

THE PRESIDENT (to JAMES): Did you ever hear your brother refer to his ridiculous hopes of rising again from the dead?

JAMES: No.

THE PRESIDENT: Did you ever hear his followers speak of their hopes that he might defy the laws of God in such a manner?

JAMES: I have already said that I knew little or nothing of his followers, not even of this man John, until the last few days.

THE PRESIDENT: Can you tell us anything about their activities during those last few days—and nights?

JAMES: I am not in their councils. Not yet.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you know what is supposed to have happened in the cemetery?

JAMES: All Jerusalem knows that. As to knowing what in truth happened, I can only reply again, 'Not yet'. I have heard that, after his crucifixion, my brother was laid in a rich man's sepulchre, and——

ADAI AH: Although he hated rich men!

JAMES: . . . No. That is not true. My brother hated no man. He hated their riches, just as he hated the pride and pomp of certain priests or Pharisees. But that is a different matter from hating those men and women who are ensnared by the deceitfulness of riches.

ADAI AH: May I ask if this is an example of evidence relevant to the main issue?

THE PRESIDENT: If you had not interrupted my questionings just now, this particular irrelevance could hardly have arisen.

ADAMAH: Again I ask pardon. But I think——

THE PRESIDENT (to JAMES): You were saying that you knew of your brother's corpse being placed in the sepulchre on the evening before Sabbath. Since then, you appear to have made more frequent contact with those whom he had deluded into loyalty towards him. Do you know what were their plans for counteracting the effects of his arrest and execution?

JAMES: I know very little. I do not think they had any plans. His death came as a thunder-clap to them. Whatever may have happened since, it has not happened by their contriving.

THE PRESIDENT: You seem very confident on that point. I might say, over-confident. We want the truth, not your speculations. Please watch your tongue.

JAMES: I know well that my tongue is an unruly member of my poor body. But I have used it in this Court to tell only such truth as I know.

THE PRESIDENT: It seems to be little enough.

JAMES: How should I know more? I am uncertain why you have summoned me to give testimony at all.

THE PRESIDENT: As the dead man's kinsman, you were expected to throw some light on the plans and plots of his followers.

JAMES: I fear, rather, that, as one who once scoffed at my own brother, I was expected to give testimony that would be pleasing to the rich men who hated him.

THE PRESIDENT: So you once counted yourself his enemy?

JAMES: Hardly. I have said that I was a scoffer, at times almost believing, at other times forbidding myself to believe. I was—double-minded, unstable. It is only in these last few days that God has given me the single mind, so that I no longer waver like the waters of the Lake.

THE PRESIDENT: And if we tell you that God has done no such thing? That it is the Devil who has hardened your heart and filled you with pride and presumption?

JAMES: . . . (No answer.)

ADAIAH: Answer His Reverence, man! Do you know in what dangers your tongue has put you today?

JAMES: . . . (No answer.)

ADAIAH: I submit that there is no purpose to be served by further questionings. The man should be dealt with elsewhere. I have already recommended arrest and reprimand for the more obstinate cases of contumacy, and it seems I must add his name to the list of such cases. Meanwhile, I move that he be dismissed from this Court.

THE PRESIDENT: I concur. Rabbi Gamaliel?

GAMALIEL: Sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Have you any objection to the dismissal of this witness?

GAMALIEL: I have already been too often in a minority. I must concur in this matter. It would be useless for me to do otherwise.

THE PRESIDENT (to JAMES): You are dismissed.

XXX

PRIVATE LETTER FROM P. CÆCILIVS SECUNDVS,
AT HIS HIRED VILLA NEAR JERUSALEM, TO
L. SEPTICIIVS FELIX, DETAINED IN THE PRÆTORIVM.

You write to tell me that you have been terrified by a dream you have had. You are afraid of coming to grief in this lawsuit of yours. You want me to postpone things for a few short days, at any rate over tomorrow. Difficult—but I'll try.

"For Dream comes forth from Jupiter himself."

All the same, it's worth asking whether you dream things that are really going to happen, or dream the exact opposite. I remember a dream I once had, myself, which makes it seem as if the one you've had may foreshadow unusual success in this case of yours.

It was when I had promised to speak for Junius Pastor. I was lying in bed, and my wife's mother appeared to me, twined herself round my knees, and begged me not to act in the case. I was only a young shaver at the time. I had to face the Four Courts, and I had some of the biggest big-wigs in the whole city against me, including some of Cæsar's friends! That alone might have shaken me, after such a bad dream. But I went ahead all the same, quieting myself with chop-logic.

"No need of omens—fight your country's fight!"

Keeping faith with a client is just the same to me as fighting for my country, or anything else dearer than country.

All went well. What's more, it was just that case which first made people listen to me, opened the door for my success.

So look and see whether you too, with that precedent to go on, can't turn your dream round to mean something good. If, on the other hand, you want to feel safe and stick to that maxim for the unadventurous, "Don't do anything till you're quite sure about it"—well, write back and tell me just that.

I'll think up some excuse. I'll manage your case just as you might manage it, and when you like.

As a matter of fact you are better placed than I was. There's no way of postponing any case in the Four Courts. It'll be difficult to postpone yours, but possible, all the same.

Farewell.

XXXI

XLIII. REPLY TO ABOVE.

Lucius Septicius Felix to Publius Cæcilius Secundus, Greetings and good news.

So I'm a 'case', am I? And 'over-cautious' at that! Well, you'd be a great deal more cautious if you'd been in my position, locked up in a part-barracks, part-prison like this Prætorium, under the same battlement-roof as a Roman Procurator who has, or had, clearly taken leave of his senses.

Yes, I write 'had', because it looks as if he had now come back to say hail to them. *Vale atque ave*. And talking about your lodging an appeal at Rome, I (this is my good news) look like getting there, a free man, before my friend and lawyer.

You can, indeed, forget about my dreaming and asking you to postpone the application to Pilate until after today. It seems you were right about reading dreams upside down for their meaning. This, as I've begun to tell you, is my lucky day.

I dreamt last night that I had indigestion. I woke up to find it was perfectly true—and most unpleasant.

"For Stomach-ache comes forth from Hell itself."

I also woke up to learn that Procula's husband had recovered from his belly-ache, or his absurd fit of jealousy, or whatever it was. The Guard brought me a paper, signed by Pontius himself, ordering release from detention. I'm to go free on the day after tomorrow, in the afternoon. I'm even free to take the road for Joppa—the first stage on the way to Rome, where I could have sworn that Pilate had sworn to stop me going!

I am only puzzled at one thing in the whole business. Why is there this delay until the day after tomorrow? It may be just a lingering bit of insanity in Pilate's mind; or perhaps he wants to get his wife away into the country, so that I can't kiss her good-bye. Anyway, it's quite unimportant. The important thing is that I am going to be freed.

I was still gloating over it all when Minucius Strabo came in to see me. One of Pilate's friends, I'd always understood. In the old days he used to be seen about in the grand Sejanus-palazzo in Rome. He's been out here as long as Pilate, and made plenty of money, judging by the way he dines and wines his other friends nowadays. I had an invitation from him, and accepted it, when I was up here in Jerusalem a fortnight ago. Talk about belly-aches next morning!

He didn't know, or pretended not to know, about Pilate's order for my release. When I told him, he asked me to come and dine again, the day after tomorrow. He tried to make my mouth water by talking about oysters and chitterlings and sea-urchins—and Spanish dancing-girls to follow. After which, I was to be escorted back to the Prætorium in time to start for Joppa at dawn the next day.

I said, No, thank-you. Heaven knows that at the moment I could do with a dancing-girl of any sort, till dawn and after! But I thought I'd write to you, and ask you for plainer fare and a safer bed for the night. It isn't just the indigestion-dream I'm thinking about. I may be free to do as I like after that afternoon, but Pilate may also change his mind, or have another fit of the yellows. I don't want to encourage him to do so by going back to the Prætorium once I'm quit of it. As soon as I'm free, I shall come straight out along the Joppa road, knock at your door without Pilate knowing I'm there, and talk to you, over a good straight supper, about poetry or anything else you like—except the illegal detention of Roman citizens, and their right of appeal to Cæsar.

Farewell, lawyer. Expect your ex-client any time before dusk the day after tomorrow, and finish up any of your

letters that you'd like me to take home with me. But maybe you'd be wiser not to put into them any of the tales that Pilate doesn't want told in Rome. I may be searched before they let me get on a ship for home.

Home! It sounds too good to be true. It's barely a year since I waved good-bye to never-you-mind-who on the quay at Ostia, but I feel a different man altogether, and a much worse as well as an unhappier one. I can't say I'm surprised at what happens to poor fellows like Pilate after five or six years of a Province like this. The Provincials may bless the divine Cæsar for giving them long-term Governors, with wives and establishments and all the rest of it, instead of the annual plundering-parties they got from the Republic. But there must be times when he seems a rather harsh god to those he sends into long exile—and to the wives who have to accompany them.

I've said I can understand Pilate's fits of mania. I find it more difficult to understand Procula's wonderful sanity. At least, I would do so, if I hadn't once gone through a stage of thinking (in the days when I was what you call a 'young shaver') that she was the best woman the gods ever made. There seemed to be little enough reason for thinking so, in those days, when she had all the usual girlish selfishness and tantrums that even I couldn't wholly admire. But maybe a young shaver's instincts were sounder than any Reason. I've seen certain things in the last week or two which made me think—rather too late now!—that I may have been right in those days.

Don't take too much notice of all this. A frightened prisoner in sight of liberty is like a very thirsty man in sight of a wine-skin—drunk before he gets it. You, at any rate, are a crabbed old lawyer, who have no right to lecture me, as you did in your last letter, for being over-prudent and unadventurous. You'll be able to discount the minor enthusiasms of a poet, still reasonably (or unreasonably) young.

Don't be too juris-prudent at supper tomorrow. Let me be poetic. If I grow too lyrical about Procula in my cups, you must discount it again. You certainly must not catch the infection, and start making love to her yourself up at the Prætorium after I've gone. You might find yourself behind bars, in my place. And there wouldn't be any learned lawyer outside 'em to frighten Pilate with applications for release, or threats of an appeal to Rome.

I won't say Farewell. I hope to be alive, on the day after tomorrow, to sup with you and to say it at breakfast next morning.

So now it's just—Till we meet again!

Postscript. I'm sending this by means of a somebody, who is not one of Pilate's friends. I am still a little puzzled about this two-day delay in His Excellency's arrangements for my release and departure.

XXXII

UNSOLICITED REPORT FROM THE SECRET AGENT
KNOWN AS 'SINON'. UNDATED. CLEARLY FROM
THE JERUSALEM DISTRICT.

No request for further information has yet reached me. Needless to say, I have been left equally unprovided with any payment for my last report, or allowance for current expenses. Accustomed as I am to similar neglect in the past, I am yet impelled by loyalty to forward to the PRÆTORIUM certain facts which I have lately collected and collated, all tending to confirm those which I have previously submitted, and to ratify my estimate of their great gravity.

1. As I foresaw, the principal sedition-mongers have gone to ground, either in the JERUSALEM area or in GALILEE. I have

obtained sufficient information about their hiding-places to enable Authority to make several important arrests, but I shall not communicate it to the PRÆTORIUM until that august but slothful body shows some signs of rewarding its most reliable informant and acting upon his advice.

2. The Tetrarch of GALILEE has apparently sent his wife HERODIAS to SEBASTE in SAMARIA, presumably in order to establish secret contact with ZEALOT-elements among the JEWISH inhabitants of the city, and encourage resistance to taxation among the SAMARITANS. The extremely illiberal scale of her expenditure and alms during her journey (and that of her daughter SALOME on her suspicious return to JERUSALEM with an escort of the IDUMÆAN Guard) is clearly a blind, covering the distribution of large sums to agitators organising rebellion. The HERODS are rich, and use their money unstintingly, instead of hoarding or allowing subordinates to embezzle it, as is the custom elsewhere. Incidentally, both the Tetrarch and his wife make generous payments to those who supply them with the information upon which they base their schemes for the overturning of ROMAN rule.

3. Reference to my report of February last will make it clear that such schemes are not principally focused on the subversive activities of JEWISH malcontents, whether in this province or in the Tetrarchy of GALILEE. It is certain that the Tetrarch (if not his less dangerous wife) bases his hopes of re-establishing the independent Empire of HEROD I, not on the aspirations of JEWISH malcontents (with most of whom he is profoundly unpopular), but on his own secret intrigues with the PERSIAN and PARTHIAN enemies of ROME. His Highness has already sent a secret letter to PERSEPOLIS, reporting the marching-orders issued to the IVth Cohort of the Xth Legion, and (as I guess) the departure on furlough of the Legate TREBONIUS, with whom he is establishing contact.

4. The SANHEDRIN pursues its usual policy of masterly misdirection of energy, based on false intelligence supplied by agents who are reasonably well paid but totally inexperienced

and incompetent. I warned JUDAS ISCARIOT, personally, against offering his services to this focal point of self-righteousness and stupidity: he now has his reward for neglecting my advice.

Their Reverences have fallen into the first and most obvious trap laid for them by the GALILEAN conspirators, recently under the leadership of the man executed last Friday. I am informed that the SANHEDRIN was discussing on the 16th Nisan the proposed arrest of his successor, and naming as that successor SIMON PETER of CAPERNAUM!

I have a carefully compiled record of this GALILEAN. It shows him to be in every way unqualified for the leadership of a shoal of perch—let alone a gang of dangerous conspirators plotting rebellion. He is young, uneducated, an unsuccessful fisherman by trade, and, in character, rash, ill-tempered and uncontrolled. He showed cowardice of the first water on the night of the arrest at GETHSEMANE. He has made himself conspicuous, during his stay in JERUSALEM by not observing the precautions enjoined on his more skilful confederates. He is unusually easy to trace and observe, owing to his conspicuous height and his extremely ugly GALILEAN accent.

The business of foisting this raw-boned booby upon the observation of Authority, as a possible successor to the leadership of the sedition, was planned and begun by the dead man himself. I have in my possession a curious but reliable report from the above-mentioned JUDAS ISCARIOT (who, at the time in question, rightly regarded himself as a far more competent candidate for leadership). It describes a conversation which took place as far north as CÆSAREA PHILIPPI. After some frivolous punning on SIMON's second name, PETROS, the then leader of the confederates banteringly said "On this rock I will found my Assembly" (note the word 'Ecclesia', derived from that of the Parliament of ATHENS: the whole movement shows some dangerous democratic tendencies). The later stages of the conversation showed

that this was little more than a joke, subsequently transformed, as I have said, into a trick for throwing dust into the eyes of Authority. SIMON PETER, with characteristic hastiness and *naïveté*, took the whole thing seriously, and within a few minutes was so blown up with pride and elation at the prospect of future importance that he began teaching his Teacher. The latter completely lost temper with him for the moment, and administered the surprisingly vehement rebuke of "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

It is, astonishingly, this SIMON PETER whom Their Reverences of the SANHEDRIN have now marked down for possible arrest, as the dead man's successor in fomenting sedition! He has nothing in common with the really dangerous leader SIMON ZELOTES, except one of his two names. One might have some respect for the policy of the SANHEDRIN if its members were debating the arrest of SIMON the ZEALOT.

4. The ingenuity of the conspirators in misleading Authority has recently been shown in a similar doubling of names. The twelfth place in their inner ring has been vacant since they murdered JUDAS. They have elected in his place a man who has, or has taken, the name of MATTHIAS. They no doubt hope that this cunning manœuvre may hoodwink Authority (and possibly Posterity!) by a confusion between the new recruit and the well-established confederate MATTHEW, a renegade from the ROMAN customs-service at TIBERIAS. The next moves of the latter should be most carefully watched.

5. Further ingenuities centre round SIMON PETER himself. It was this stupid fanatic (I believe the man to be honest, according to his lights) whom the schemers sent out to the cemetery in the early hours of April 29th to 'discover' and make his report on what they had been quietly doing there during the night.

With him was sent a GALILEAN neighbour and cousin of his, named JOHN. JOHN is much the youngest member of the inner ring. He appears to have some tincture of education,

a fair knowledge of Greek, and even a taste for poetry. He may have ambitions about writing poems himself! This unpractical young idealist made an excellent second-string to the principal dupe, SIMON PETER.

On the morning in question, he seems to have out-run SIMON, arrived first at the tomb, but stopped short at its doorway, perhaps restrained by some superstition or scruple. He did not venture to enter until his companion came up and blundered in. There seems to be no object in reporting what they found inside—the usual rock-hewn ledge on which dead bodies are placed in such rich men's sepulchres: the usual linen wrappings, charged with spice, in which dead bodies are swathed for burial: even the usual napkin that is twisted round the head of a corpse. But there was no corpse—no dead body. In fact, it had been stolen away by means of a midnight raid upon the cemetery. But in the minds of these two country lads, PETER and JOHN, the inference was clear—some miracle must have occurred. One is not surprised to hear that they embellished the account which they gave to their confederates-in-hiding with stories about persons, or angels, clothed in white; these figments of their fancy told them to do what Common Sense had already told similar and wavier companions to do, quit the dangerous neighbourhood of JERUSALEM, make their way to GALILEE, and so escape the attention of a possibly watchful ROMAN Authority. One is just as little surprised to learn that some of the women who followed them to the sepulchre (or, by some accounts, preceded them to it) mistook one of the gardeners for their dead teacher and leader, miraculously risen from the dead.

Is there anything in all this to surprise an observer who knows something of popular delusions? Is it not the inevitable consequence of the sudden crucifixion, of the dashing of many foolish hopes, and of the cunning measures taken by the really dangerous conspirators (naturally without SIMON PETER's knowledge) to revive those hopes and forge them into an instrument of rebellion?

To sum up—to ask “What happened at the sepulchre?” concentrating attention upon what SIMON PETER and young JOHN may or may not have seen there in the early hours of the morning after Sabbath, is to neglect the far more important question, “What had the more skilful and more dangerous conspirators been doing in the cemetery during the previous hours of darkness, in order to produce, on simpler minds, the impression that some sort of miracle had occurred?”

My previous reports have, I trust, made it clear that I regard the answer to this second question as a really momentous one. I am prepared to disregard the sneers of the PRÆTORIUM clerks and say that the difference between a right and a wrong answer to that question may be the difference between a continuance of, or a rapid and violent end to, ROMAN authority in PALESTINE. I believe that, with reasonable assistance, I could soon discover the right answer. I would supply it as soon as I am properly recompensed for doing so. Without some such recompense, I must decline to continue the difficult and dangerous work on which I have so long been engaged.

XXXIII

COMMENT ON THE ABOVE REPORT. DATED
FROM THE JERUSALEM PRÆTORIUM.

WE hope Your Excellency is now satisfied that this man's information is valueless.

It was recently considered that the question, ‘What happened at the Tomb?’ might come to have some small political importance, but Your Excellency was no doubt wise in resisting the SANHEDRIN's demand for an Official Enquiry. Certainly the matter has now sunk into insignifi-

cance with the growing importance of other topics, particularly the rumour of a new tax on raw hides, and the possibility of an impending war with the PARTHIANS on the SYRIAN frontier.

It is suggested that the man SINON should not be encouraged to submit any further reports.

XXXIV

COMMENT ON THE ABOVE COMMENT. CLEARLY FROM THE HAND OF PONTIUS PILATE, PRESUMABLY AT JERUSALEM.

YOUR hopes are not justified. I am not so easily 'satisfied' as you appear to be. You will not hasten any such process by flattering remarks about my 'wise' decisions.

Please cease forthwith to instruct me in the business of government. The creature hiding under the name 'Sinon' (by the way, did you invent this pseudonym, or has he himself been reading Virgil?) is obviously unbalanced and, if you like, unreliable. But it is a long step from saying that to dismissing all his stuff as 'valueless'. I even begin to feel some interest in this man Judas Iscariot, in whom we seem to have lost a helpful agent.

'Sinon' appears, at least, to have some sense of the great urgency and gravity of the present crisis, even if he attributes it to such matters as one might expect to preoccupy a native. I wish some of my staff at the Prætorium were similarly awake, instead of being pre-occupied with wine, women and food.

Keep the man 'Sinon' on a string, and send on to me anything he submits to the Prætorium.

P.P.P.

XXXV

MILITARY ORDER ISSUED FROM THE JERUSALEM
HEADQUARTERS. DATED KAL. MAI. COSS. TIB.
SEI.

IN view of certain unexpected developments in the JERUSALEM Area, Cohort IV. (Leg. X.) will remain attached to the garrison for the time being.

As soon as circumstances permit, fresh orders will be issued for the movement of the Cohort northward, to join the Proconsular forces in SYRIA.

Pontius Pilate,
Procurator.

XXXVI

LETTER OF RESIGNATION. DATED FROM EN-SHE-
MESH, OUTSIDE JERUSALEM.

Gamaliel ben-Simeon, Doctor in the Law of the Lord God of Israel, sends greetings to the Lord Ha-Kayyaf (Caiaphas), Priest in the Temple at Jerusalem.

YOUR lordship will pardon me if I write by dictation. My right hand was injured yesterday by a stone thrown in the outer court of the Temple, where I was endeavouring to persuade a mob of fools to refrain from riot. They did not refrain, until Pilate sent out soldiers from his castle to teach them peace. Meanwhile two of my fingers are broken and I shall not hold a pen for a month and more. One of my pupils is with me, writing down what I speak.

I am constrained to tell your lordship that, after striving

for many days to fulfil the duties entrusted to me by the Sanhedrin, I must now abandon my effort, and dissociate myself from all the future conduct of the Enquiry for which I was commissioned. I have already persevered too long, endangering my reputation and finding myself at increasing variance with my colleagues. If they reach any decision, I shall not, I fear, be able to subscribe to it. If I drew up and signed my own conclusions, I should make even bitterer enemies of them, without pleasing the Sanhedrin which appointed us.

For the injury to my reputation—it is now being attacked, behind my back, by the agents of those whom I challenge face to face in the Court of Enquiry. It is rumoured that I tried to put the Sanhedrin in the wrong by a wilful absence from its plenary meeting at midnight on the 13/14th of Nisan; as your lordship will remember, it was then that the prisoner from Galilee was accused of Blasphemy, judged worthy of death by our Law, and handed over to the Procurator upon other charges such as would secure his execution under the law of Rome. If your lordship does not know why I was absent when these things were done, I beg that enquiry should be made. Your lordship will discover that, whether by error or by intention, no summons to such a meeting was ever sent to me, nor did I hear of what was then said and voted until the prisoner was already upon the cross.

I would say 'error' and not 'intention' but for one strange fact. I have learnt that certain persons, perhaps known to your lordship, were eager for a unanimous sentence at the midnight meeting, and planned beforehand to secure one. I have also learnt that one other member of the Sanhedrin, the Rabbi Nakdemon (Nicodemus), received no summons to attend. Had he and I been present, it might have been far more difficult to secure unanimity for the sentence.

I make no complaint of the omission, only of the present slander. I am glad to be free of any association with what was done by night. It is difficult to write of this to your lord-

ship, who then presided over and led the Court. But it is sufficiently known to all members of the Sanhedrin that, in cases where a man's life is in question, all proceedings held after sundown are by our Law invalid. It is equally well-known that no man may be sentenced to death after a single hearing of his case: it must be brought up again, on a second day, after a night's sleep has corrected hasty judgments, and given anger time to cool. Finally, our Law most strictly commands that no man be condemned on his own evidence, on words from his own mouth. Nothing he says when faced, and maybe confused, by a court of law can be taken as testimony against him. He must be accused by other witnesses, at least two in number, exactly confirming each other's charges. Such is our Law, whereof I am a Doctor, whereof you, my lord Caiaphas, are assuredly not ignorant.

Your lordship saw fit to override its wise and merciful provisions. A Court was summoned at midnight, long after dark. Its sentence was pronounced after one hasty hearing, with no respite for cooler judgment. Yet no two witnesses had agreed in, or confirmed, each other's testimony against the Galilean. The question was put to him directly, and the reply out of his own mouth was made the groundwork of the verdict, whereby he was sent to death. Your lordship sanctioned that breach of law by a saying which is now quoted much in Jerusalem, "What need have we of further witness?"

Indeed, indeed, my lord, those who barred me from your midnight council saved me from much shame.

I do not doubt that your lordship felt certain that you were acting under the pressure of great dangers to the peace and safety of Jerusalem, dangers to our holy religion, such as demand arbitrary and even illegal measures of defence. I cannot share that certainty. I had already opposed, at a previous meeting of the Sanhedrin, the spoken opinion that it was expedient for one man to die for the people. The Romans, indeed, have a saying that the people's safety is

the first and greatest of all laws. Yet how many tyrants have used such sayings, not to save, but to endanger and enslave their peoples?

I have striven only for justice. I am slandered as a follower of a man unjustly killed. I never saw the man, and know little of his teaching. I dislike what little I have heard. I will certainly not say that he was innocent of the crime of Blasphemy, for which the Sanhedrin passed sentence of death upon him. I will only say that that sentence was hurried, and illegal, and may yet prove to have been stupendously unwise.

I, too, have governed men. I know that there are times when Law must be stretched, here and there, to meet the menace of Circumstance: when many small injustices may have to be done, in order that all justice should not perish. At such moments a good man stretches reluctantly, inch by inch, with a keen eye for any chance to desist, with prayers to God for His guidance and for His pardon on injustices. But when men magnify the menace in order to excuse what pride and passion prompt, when they hasten with blinded eyes, not to stretch reluctantly this point or that, but wilfully and gleefully to wrench the whole fabric of Law away, then darkness has indeed descended upon them. I am thankful to God Who kept me sundered from such men, and keeps me following a glimmer of His light.

I have spoken so far of Justice, the means whereby it may have to be tempered with Wisdom, and the tricks men play to wrench and deform it with their Cunning. The search for Truth is in like case. I am now dictating this letter to your lordship because, after being spared partnership in the justice of the Sanhedrin, I must renounce partnership in its present quest for truth.

It has become clear that the two are even more closely bound up together than I feared at first. It seems that this Enquiry, to which I was commissioned, aims less at the discovery of truth than at the use of cunning and prejudice to

cover up a past misuse of justice. I recognise that Circumstance may sometimes demand such a covering-up, lest all government be brought into ill-repute, and the people perish indeed. But surely, my lord, this thing must be done well and wisely, or not done at all. If truth is too dangerous to be revealed in full, then it must be coloured and cajoled into seeming innocence, not bludgeoned and shouted down. I can think of no danger that can be met by such means. If the Sanhedrin believes otherwise, if it requires a violent hand upon the bludgeon, a loud voice for shouts, then why, in God's name, did it include my name, Gamaliel, on the list of its enquirers? If it hoped to cloke its misdoings under the shadow of my good name, I am now forced to resign before that name is dishonoured.

What folly is it that imprisons soldiers of our Temple Guard, dictates to them our own story of certain happenings by night, and puts them to the torture when they persist in a less welcome tale? Again, I do not myself think that angels descended to open a tomb, scatter its guards, and welcome a corpse back to life. But I am quite sure that only fools would try to obliterate such a fairy-tale by twisted rope or irons heated in the fire. Would it not be more cunning, and more successful, to offer the men money, favour, even promotion, in return for a short admission that darkness and confusion probably made them mistake armed ruffians from Galilee for visitants from another world? The tale (and it may even be the truth) would please all except Galileans. It would not take much money to induce the watchmen to tell it, none to induce all Jerusalem to believe.

I will spare your lordship further accounts of froth and fury in the Court, witnesses browbeaten and bullied, when they should have been merely puzzled and confused. I must ask to be excused from further attendance at the spectacle wherein the uneasy conscience of judges, despising wisdom and lacking cunning, proves its own guilt by bluster. I cannot help to draw suspicion and ridicule upon the proceedings of

our holy Sanhedrin. I, who have no faith in the Galilean or his teaching, cannot assist my colleagues to set all Jerusalem asking one question, "What manner of man have our rulers killed, that they take such pains to veil in darkness the manner of his death and burial?"

It was for this reason that I opposed in council, and will again oppose, the suggestion, made by Rabbi Adaiah and others, that the scattered remnant of the dead man's followers should be sought out, arrested and punished. Such remnants are dispersed and withered if none takes note of them. Such remnants can grow again, and grow dangerous, if men seek to stamp them down.

I believe that their leader was, if not a blasphemer, at least deluded by what the Greeks call Enthusiasm, and we distrust as madness, prompting him to invoke some God of his own fantasy. We do him too much honour by taking on ourselves a great burden of business in order to obliterate his memory. If, by some strange chance, he was in part God's prophet, then we are fools indeed to combat that which we are less than powerless to subdue. We are but patient oxen, harnessed to His will, pricked on by the goad of His wisdom. It will go hard with us if we kick against the pricks.

The voice is that of Gamaliel ben-Simeon, Doctor in God's Law. The hand that writes is the hand of Saul of Tarsus, pupil of Gamaliel.

The said Saul asks that his writing be not taken as token of agreement with all that the learned Rabbi says, especially in the matter of punishing, or not punishing, those who still preach in the name of the man convicted of blasphemy by the Sanhedrin.

I, Gamaliel, am content that this protest of his should accompany my letter to the High Priest.

XXXVII

COMMENT ON THE ABOVE DOCUMENT. DATED FROM THE HOUSE OF CALAPHAS, HIGH PRIEST, IN THE UPPER ZION QUARTER OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM, NISAN.

The attached letter is to be passed immediately to the Keeper of the Archives. It should be included among those which are only available to other Councillors of the Sanhedrin by written authority from me, High Priest at Jerusalem. Let the enclosed comment be attached to it, under seal.

RABBI GAMALIEL has won for himself a high reputation for learning and for integrity, which there is no need to impugn. But he has also laboured under suspicion for holding certain independent and self-willed opinions, damaging to harmony of action in the Sanhedrin. This suspicion is abundantly justified by several passages in his letter.

Rabbi Gamaliel claims to understand practical problems of government. There is little in this letter to substantiate such a claim, much to render it laughable. All the Rabbi's recommendations must be viewed with the gravest circumspection.

One such recommendation may possibly prove acceptable. I have not been notified that the contumacious soldiers of the Temple Guard are being subjected to bodily torture. If this is fact, and not a figment of Rabbi Gamaliel's fancy, then he is probably right in suggesting a change in methods of persuasion. I am drafting, separately, an order to the Commandant, authorising the offer of money-grants to these men, and a hint of possible promotion.

In all other matters, this letter exhibits the expected features which divide the smaller, Pharisaical, portion of the

Sanhedrin from its majority of soundly-trained Sadduceans. There is the Pharisee's characteristic preoccupation with judicial and ceremonial formalities, and with the petty details of the Law, often at variance with its spirit and intention. There is the well-known Pharisaical self-righteousness, strikingly demonstrated. Rabbi Gamaliel, with transparent false modesty, describes himself as following 'a mere glimmer' of the divine Light. But he condemns all but himself, without reserve, as stumblers in total darkness. May the God of Israel chasten and correct such pride!

The wholesale condemnation of the Enquiry initiated by the Sacred Council is equally characteristic. Rabbi Gamaliel suggests no substitute, and would probably accept none—unless it were a Court consisting entirely of Pharisees.

After sealing and disposing of these two documents, the Keeper of the Archives will forward for my perusal, from the Register of Personalities, all available records of the young man, Saul of Tarsus, his origin, status and present reputation. He seems to be a promising student, and may yet prove an acceptable vessel of God's wrath against unbelievers.

(signed) Yusuf Ha-Kayyaf,
High Priest.

XXXVIII

PRIVATE LETTER. FROM LINNÆA, WIFE TO P. POPILIUS LÆNAS, RECENTLY APPOINTED PREFECT AT BERSABÆA (BEER-SHEBA) IN S. JUDÆA.

Linnæa to the Lady Procula, Greetings.

I'm sure you'll be delighted to hear, my dear, that Bersabæa is *much* more tolerable than we were afraid it was going to be.

I'm just laughing, now, at the silly gossip about your Pilate sending my Publius to be Prefect over a wilderness.

The air and water are both good. We have *much* more elbow-room in our little Prætorium here (a disused synagogue) than we had in our pokey lodgings in the Jerusalem back-street! After all the clatter and riot and *intrigue* that used to be going on all round us, I am *genuinely* happier down here, in this quiet little country town. Several contingents of soldiers and officers have been through already, on the road to or from Egypt. When their caravans stop here for the night, and open their bales (as Publius makes them do), we can buy some of their best things off them without having to pay the *ridiculous* prices they would ask in Jerusalem.

'Also, it's promotion, isn't it? Please remind Pilate that he spoke of Publius only being here a year or two, and then getting the really important responsibility which I am *sure* he deserves. I'm happy here, for the present, but I'm not saying I wouldn't like to live, *eventually*, in Cæsarea itself. As you know, neither I nor Publius have land in Italy to go back to, and, anyway, they say that the time for that sort of thing is over, and that the Emperor wants those who govern his Provinces to live and die in them. I'd not complain if, after doing our duty to the Emperor in Bersabæa for a few years, I could pass the rest of my life in Cæsarea Palæstina. That's not asking much, is it?

I wanted to tell you that, in spite of what everybody told us in Jerusalem, slaves are *quite* cheap here, and *quite* good. I bought an old nurse for the children from Publius's predecessor, and she is proving even better than he said she would. By the way, his method of recommending her to us, as possible purchasers, was to tell me that we should not have to flog her more than once a month! And he looked down his long nose at me when I said that we were not in the habit of flogging old women of sixty.

Her name is Milcala, and it was really she who reminded

me that I ought to write you a letter. She is a widow, from a village down here called Kerioth. Her husband was a merchant in some small way, and she didn't have to sell herself until some years after his death—too late to be properly broken-in, as her long-nosed owner would probably have said! There's been absolutely no need to break her in. The children are getting quite fond of her already. As a matter of fact, I want to do her a favour. That's why I'm writing to you.

She has—or used to have—a son up at Jerusalem. It sounds to me as if the boy must have treated her pretty badly. You know, or you can guess, how a mother feels. I do hope you'll really *know* one day, Procula. It's not too late yet. Pontius isn't as old as all that. It might make all the difference, for both of you. Well, Milcaia has been hearing stories that her son is dead, that he's been murdered up at Jerusalem. Could you find out for me if anyone there knows anything about him?

I don't know why I called him a boy. He must be between 30 and 40. The name is Judas. I think his father used to deal in reeds for the basket-makers at Gaza. This son of his left home many years ago. He was living for a long time at the other end of the country, up north. He picked up with Galilæans there, and he seems to have been wandering all over the province with some of them lately, doing no proper work. I gather that he began by sending his mother money, and then sent letters just promising more money, and then sent nothing at all. It's twelve years since his mother saw him, and five since she had a letter.

I don't know why I'm wasting so much space on him, but there was one thing that rather interested me, I mean, in what Milcaia said. She refused to believe that these Galilæan gipsies murdered him. She's superstitious, like all village folk, and she has no illusions about her scapegrace son. She tells me she has always been quite sure that he would one day kill himself. I asked her how she could know such a

thing. I couldn't get at the real reasons (if she has any), only at an old wives' tale from the village, which to her, naturally, seems better proof than any proposition from Euclid. She says that Judas was born about the same time as one of the old kings, the Herods, was on his deathbed, and she heard that this Herod actually tried to commit suicide at the dinner table, using a little knife they'd given him for the fruit. She says that Judas always had a curious way of cutting up his fruit, making little squares out of a whole apple before he'd put one in his mouth. And that, if you please, is Q.E.D. . . . *quod erat demonstrandum*. You are not satisfied with it as proof of suicide? No? Neither am I, my dear Procula! I'm only telling you about it to show you the way in which these people's minds can work.

You'll be surprised at my talking about Euclid. It isn't because of boring memories of school-days. I'd have forgotten all that long ago and little Publilius is too young for such boredom yet. It wasn't from him I got it. It was one of the officers from Egypt who started talking about Euclid the other evening. Did you know he lived in Egypt? I suppose it was pyramids that set him thinking about the triangles and the square on the hypotenuse, and all that nonsense.

Well, send me your news when you can find time. Or wait till you are back in Cæsarea and then you can send me its news, too—what the shops in the Via Sidonica are selling now, and all that sort of thing. I hear you have been having the usual Passover ructions, up at Jerusalem. I hope your Pilate has quieted them down by now. It's wonderful what a few trained soldiers can do. Publius says he wishes he had a rather longer assignment up there than here in Bersabæa.

The people round here don't like us, of course, but, praise be to the gods, they aren't always *pretending* they do, to our faces, and then sharpening knives for us behind our backs—like some I could name in Jerusalem! Publius manages to keep them pretty quiet by his own methods. Not *really* cruel

methods. He's quite determined to upset the old family reputation for cruelty. I suppose it's a century and more since a Popilius Lænas helped start all that gossip, and his father and grandfather were models of lenity. Forgive the pun; it's stale in our household. But I don't think it's either his own lenient methods or the memory of Long-nose's sterner ones that have kept things quiet in Bersabæa. I think it's a half-cohort of the Xth, which is all that stands between the local people and the gods-alone-know-what out of the desert, in the way of pillage and murder. Long may it stay in the desert, well out of sight!

A caravan came in last night, and I am taking the liberty of sending you four ells of rather good linen I bought cheap. I hope you will find some use for it, either as towelling, or for wrapping up your husband's official togas, to keep them clean in between official occasions. Anyway, I'd like you to have it.

My own and my husband's respects to His Excellency the Procurator. *Please* remind him of his promises about moving my husband on soon to a more important post, if possible in Cæsarea. Meanwhile, our love and good wishes to you.

XXXIX

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM JERUSALEM.

Herod ben-Herod, Lord of Galilee and Peræa, sends greetings to his wife, the Lady Herodias, and an answer to her letter from Sebaste.

YOUR daughter Salome reached me in safety. I send her back to Sebaste, misliking the tricks she may play here in Jerusalem.

You impute to me a desire that you should return to me,

your husband. As always, you read the minds of others most unskilfully.

Stay where you are, light of my eyes and bane of my life. I do not care what mischief you do in Sebaste. I will certainly not try to entice you back by promising to prepare for you (as you seem to ask) such a blood-bath of babies, out at Bethlehem, as would prove me as great a savage as my father.

You are at pains to remind me that he was also your grandfather, by another, an un-Samaritan member of his succession of ten wives. I do not know who first brought into our family this strange custom of marrying our nieces, which I have followed to my sorrow. You left one uncle, my brother Philip, to marry me, another. You seem now to be regretting your second bargain as bitterly as I do myself. I fear that if you were to break it for a third adventure, within or without the circle of your kindred, Salome would have to dance the heads off more than a single John Baptist, in order to silence all preachings against your flightiness. There are decencies to be observed, even in politics, even in a land to which my father bequeathed murder and adultery as mainsprings of its rulers' lives.

It seems that you are still bemused with the legend of his greatness. Remember that I was brought up in that legend. I was given, for absent father, the picture of a gallant young captain, loved by his soldiers and admired by the common people, whose homes he saved from the marauding armies of their enemies. I saw him on his return from whirlwind charges against the desert Bedouin, from laughing escalades of the eagle's-nest fortresses of mountain brigands. I was told how wisely he acted the part of go-between and peace-maker between us and Rome. I heard him praised as the restorer of safety and plenty to a long-ravaged countryside, the builder and beautifier of a hundred cities, here and abroad, by whose word and wealth towers and temples and harbours rose by magic, above ancient ruin and neglect.

I grew up to know him better. I found my father a diseased old drunkard, even more tyrant in his home than he was in his kingdom: stumbling and shouting round his palace in terror of his own shadow: fearing and hating all the sons he had begotten, except the most worthless of us, to whom he tried in vain to bequeath his ill-gotten power. Do you suppose that I have forgotten the days when jealousy and suspicion drove him to put two of my brothers to death, and then, sitting at table, tried to put an end to the misery of his own existence by plunging a fruit-knife into his own stringy neck? The servants wrenched it from his fumbling fingers, and gave him a few more months of miserable life. He died still whining and truckling to Rome, or rather to any Roman whom he guessed, often wrongly, was likely to become her master in her long wars against herself. He left a Cæsarea to become a Roman capital, a gorgeous Temple at Jerusalem, built to a God in whom he had never believed—to please faithful worshippers who give him no thanks for its worldly magnificence. He left a kingdom cowed and bewildered, a people swift to send abroad, asking for a Roman Procurator to rule over them, rather than another King of Herod's brood.

Many of them have now regretted that request, and Rome's harsh granting of it. None love the Roman Procurators. But few regret Herod or pretend to do so.

Those few cluster round you and me, lying and flattering. I must listen in patience while they tell me that he was the light of Israel and that darkness descended with his death. I myself know that it was he who put out most of our lights. I cannot listen in patience when you, my foolish wife, upbraid me for not playing the ape to such a King as Herod the Not-so-Great.

I bear his name, but not, I trust, his nature. You and I live in a new age, making new demands on us. When we met and loved (you loved me once, leaving my brother Philip for my sake!), it was in Rome itself. I was there learn-

ing the hard lesson which you still reject, that Rome has finished fighting against herself, that she has an Empire to rule, trains men to govern and plunder it without bloodshed, and has no further use for the so-called allies who are now less than puppet-kings.

I learnt other and more welcome lessons in Greece, such as you could not begin to understand. Born a Jew and brought up in the narrow world of Jewry, I learnt that there are foreign truths more reasonable than ours, other influences than that of our tribal God. But I should also have learnt what you had to teach me, that it is useless to speak of Reason to a woman.

Continue, then, to lust after the power you will never gain. Continue to wish that you had married your grandfather rather than your uncle. Hire spies to collect for you all the back-stairs gossip of Jerusalem, and give them double pay when they bring you the latest lies about the shortcomings of the detested Procula. You will do her no harm, and much to yourself; but I know better than to try and dissuade you.

There are matters in which I can and will prevent you from meddling. Some of them I will not name, for fear of tempting you to meddle. I had drunk too much on the night when you and Salome tricked me into killing the Baptist—a deed worthy of my father! The like shall not happen again. If I did not think your new schemes so mad as to defeat themselves before they are begun, I would put a stop to your meddling in the affair of John's friend, the dead preacher from my Tetrarchy of Galilee. I shall not tell you why I thought it wise to send him back to Pilate for execution. It is true that I hoped to get proof of the many stories I had heard of the unusual powers granted to him, strange cases of healing which the physicians could not explain, influence over swine, or other beasts, and many like wonders reported of him. It is true also that I failed. For that reason among others, I, too, am trying to discover what has happened at

his tomb after his death. For dead he is: the Romans are not such fools as you imagine. Their cross ends all.

I am more likely to unravel the whole garment of the truth than your liars and flatterers to brush against its outmost skirts. And I am sure that neither they nor you will ever be able to use it, or the memory of it, to cloke your plots, for Power.

I am human, and a King's son. I have not said that I do not desire Power. I am told that the dead preacher called me Fox (though it was not for that word that I sent him back to the cross). I do not say the grapes are sour. I only know that they are out of my reach.

Leap for them, vixen! Blame me when you snap at empty air. But do not hope to persuade me by any taunt into letting you clamber on my back. There are many reasons why I must remain Tetrarch, and wear no royal crown. One of them is that my Kingship would make the vixen Queen.

Stay at Sebaste. You do less harm there (I suppose) than you might be doing in Jerusalem, where strange things impend. At least you leave me freer to work my own work, and make the discoveries for which I seek.

You have your own means of getting the news from Jerusalem. I cannot gratify you with further tales of Procula's ill-health or pale complexion. I gratify myself by watching Pilate grow daily more uneasy, more tyrannical, and more—may I say it?—more like my father Herod. I do not yet know the reason. No crime or folly he is likely to commit here, no complaint sent of him to Rome by Jews, can unseat a Procurator appointed by our lord the Emperor and befriended by his lord Sejanus. I am seeking for the cause of his growing insecurity and suspicions. I have better spies than yours, and shall soon learn the truth.

I hope to learn also, from other informants, that you are growing tired of some of your more foolish forms of mischief-making. It would be a pleasure to think that you

might have grown a little wiser before we meet again. Much wiser you will never grow. Farewell.

XL

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM MANAHATH, 21 NISAN. NICODEMUS TO JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

Nakdemon ben-Gorion to his friend Yusuf, called of Ramathaim, Greetings and Health.

YOUR long and friendly letter reached me here among my vineyards. I sent back your messenger immediately. He bore, I fear, a very scanty reply.

I am still here. I cannot yet send you full answer. I have my reasons.

I may or may not be able to make them clear to you in this letter. I will try to set some of them down. Be sure that among them is no feeling of friendship diminished. Still less any desire to seem discourteous.

You yourself asked pardon for discourtesy. There was no need. Yes, I am Pharisee, trained and content to be so. Yes, he whom you and I laid in your sepulchre last week spoke many hard words against the hypocrisy of Pharisees. But he never spoke against our teaching—or rarely, in small matters of detail. Rather he commended it, blaming only those of us who will not do what they teach others to do. Never did he commend the contrary teaching of the Sadducees. Once, when they tried to entrap him, making mock of our doctrine of a future life, he turned the tables and made mock of them.

On the night before we buried him, he ate his Passover, as is the rule of the Pharisees, on the eve before that of Sabbath. Next day it was not Pharisees, but Caiaphas and

the Sadducees, before they held their Sabbath Passover, who sent him to his death.

You also write hesitatingly of your desire to travel afar. No, indeed, I would not call this a sickly dream. I might once have done so. Now we stand in the slipway, about to be launched into strange, new times. Many of us will travel afar. Your desire to do so may be the still, small voice that tells you of God's will for you. The example of the prophet Elijah teaches us to obey such little voices rather than the loud winds and the louder thunderstorms.

When I speak of strange times ahead, I do not refer to the new Dispersion of the Jews, the new (perhaps) Captivity, which we have cause to fear. Even here at Manahath, I am told of things which may soon make that fear more urgent. What is this new stir among the Herodians, since the Tetrarch's wife left Jerusalem for Samaria? They say Pilate has fallen into a black mood, giving orders and counter-orders to his cohorts, frowning where he used to smile and fawning where he lately frowned. These things may, or may not, portend fresh disturbances, perhaps the general bloodshed that impends. But I think of other things, things of more moment than the darkness among our rulers, the shedding of poor men's blood.

You go abroad, perhaps, to tell other peoples of those weightier things. I believe, as you do, that the teacher we buried wished his message to be carried to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. Only I would send one word of warning.

I have some little learning. You have been merchant, trafficking daily with strangers, hearing frequent accounts from distant lands—from the India where men buy your ivory, the Britain which you spoke of as sending us her tin. Our eyes may at times pierce through what the prophet Isaiah calls "the veil that is over the nations". We know that distant countries are peopled by men, not by unclean beasts. Among them may be good men, of whom we can make proselytes, teaching them God's word. Go—and make

many. Hopes of so doing come with some ease to men of our experience. But they will seem strange indeed to the Galileans among whom the message was left. They are unlettered. As you say, and say more than once, they are simple men. There may be many conflicts and jealousies before they will agree to the message being spread abroad, among Gentiles and foreigners. Walk warily, lest you wound their simplicity and embitter their conflicts.

You can count on my help in this matter. We shall need the help of others of wide mind—even if they be Pharisees! I am told that one such helper, the dead Teacher's brother, James, is now being accepted, tardily but joyfully, as a leader among his disciples, and that he is a man of wide mind, though a Galilean. We need others. Jews, not of Galilee or Judæa, but of the old Dispersion, men who have lived and been born as citizens of a foreign city, might make allies. One such, converted to the truth of the new message, would be of help to our cause. If he held Roman citizenship and could travel freely about the world, he might do the world much good.

You see how I hesitate, dealing wordily with small matters. I leave the great one, the pith of your letter, still untouched. May the God of Israel help me to answer it aright!

I could not have done so if I had written immediately, sending a reply to you while you were still in the mood that prompted your own letter. Perhaps now I write too soon. But things are changing round us more swiftly than we could recently have believed possible. Men and their moods change with them.

You must surely know what I, as a teacher of God's Law, have had to learn again and again. This is the lesson—that it is far worse than useless to offer a spiritual truth to a man who is unready to receive it. He who pours fresh water upon the desert sand can do no good, and yet does little evil; the dry sand drinks up the moisture, and, a moment later, it is dry sand again. But he who tries to put fresh truth into a

mind that is in no mood to grasp it, that man may do grave wrong, hard to undo again. The mind stiffens and blunts itself in resentment, and grows more stubborn against the truth it most needs. If the teacher persists, it will summon up passion and appetite and prejudice to cloud the issue, calling, and thinking, them Reason. Such clouds are not quickly dispelled.

Do I grow discourteous, matching your mind with those of other men in like mood? It is the mind of my dearest friend, whom I could hardly love if he were not human. I count your love among my most treasured possessions. Yet, for truth's sake, I must risk the loss of my treasure.

I am certain that, in your life too, there have been moments when you have caught hold of some fragment of truth, but found other human minds unable to accept it. Did you beg them to share it with you? Did you, as I have done, find yourself confronted with eyes of blank stone, faces that gobbled at you like a turkey-cock's? All men, surely, have known such moments. They give food for much thought.

They come most often, I take it, to those who know most truth. The world rejects them. The world (so runs a saying of the Romans) prefers to be deceived—*mundus vult decipi*. To know and love truth is to be alone. He of whom we write, on his last night on earth, spoke at supper of being utterly alone—save for God. What must He have felt next day, seeing Pilate's eyes of stone, or looking down from his Cross on the turkey-cock gobblings of the crowd below?

The Romans have another phrase. Rome calls its own High Priest, *Pontifex Maximus*, the great builder of bridges. Bridges between man and God. Bridges between one man and another, who would otherwise be alone.

I sought him out first in Galilee, by candlelight, behind closed doors. I was ashamed to be seen seeking him in the light of day. I found him, and found that he could build bridges, indeed!

I had much to unlearn. Far more than you, dear friend. I brought to him vast stores of learning. I do not boast; they are vast. But they shrank and dwindled to nothing as he spoke. They were suddenly of less account than a dried pea, than a smear of dove's dung on the Temple pavement. Nothing mattered, except what he was saying to me. "Are you a teacher in Israel," he asked, "and yet know not these things?" I groped at his words, hungry to understand. The candle burnt down another inch, to gutter in its socket. Still I listened in bewilderment. "I have told you earthly things," he said, "and you do not believe them. How can you believe when I tell you heavenly things?" Of such little use was all my learning to me.

I wish I had some small part of his power over words. Was there ever a poet to match him? If such power were granted me, you would not turn away your face when I say, "He is risen."

You wrote saying that you *could* not believe it: that you did not *want* any rising-again, for yourself or others: that you were proud to serve God and your neighbour, without the reward of any such hope. Did you mark your own word—proud? Must you shut out truth because it disturbs your pride?

Leave such pride to Gentiles, to the heathen priests of Persia, or to the Stoics of Rome. They are proud to be virtuous for virtue's sake, without hope of a hereafter. Pride drives many of the Stoic sect, at last, to commit suicide, and to make a virtue of that which we know to be a loathsome crime. Such blindness is pardonable in a Roman. It would ill become a child of Israel.

Do not speak again of not *wanting* to rise again from the dead. Humble your pride, and acknowledge that it cannot matter in the least whether you *want* or do not *want* another life. All that matters is what is coming to you, with or against your will. All that matters is truth, which is the will of God.

You deny that he to whom you gave your own sepulchre—to your eternal honour!—spoke of rising again from it. I think you are mistaken. I have heard something of his trial at the midnight meeting of the Sanhedrin, from which I, and proud Gamaliel, were kept away by the cunning of our colleagues. At that trial one of his followers, turned traitor, came to bear witness against him. The fellow warped his master's words, and put his own meaning to them. He spoke of a boast to destroy our Temple, which Herod the Great took many years to build, and then to raise it up again within three days, by some magic spell, before the gaping eyes of all Jerusalem. There was no second witness to confirm such mad testimony. It was false. The Teacher had indeed warned men that Herod's temple must be destroyed, as you and I know it will be, when Rome grows impatient of the trouble we cause her, and sends legions to blot us out. The false witness twisted that warning in with another saying of his, foretelling that, after three days, he would raise his own body from the tomb. So even his enemies and accusers bear witness, in some sort, that he spoke of his resurrection. Will you strive to persuade his friends that he never used such words?

He did not speak them in our presence, yours or mine. He spoke them only to the few, the very few, whom he had gathered most closely round him. They were but twelve, and one of them was the traitor and false witness of whom I write. It is no marvel that the lost soul found none to confirm his testimony at the trial.

Nor is it any marvel that such words were kept from our ears. Search your own heart, or your own mood, for a reason. I do not need to search. I see always in my mind a picture of a little room in Galilee, with locked doors, and one candle gleaming in the darkness. I hear again the reason why so much has been kept from me. He told me earthly things, and I could not believe them. How could I have believed if he had told me heavenly things? Perhaps, if he

had spoken to me then of rising again from the sepulchre, I would have gobbled at him like a turkey-cock.

You cannot believe this thing that has happened—or could not when you wrote to me. I now send you some part of what may help to persuade you. The rest—not yet. I must beseech you, meanwhile, to bear with any discourtesy you may discern. It does not spring from lack of love. I am persuaded that the Galilean loved even the Pharisees whom he upbraided so bitterly, hating only the sins and the hypocrisies under which they laboured. Some, I know, left him in burning anger, but then pondered his words more coolly, and knew that they had deserved them. There are many such, and some that would gladly join with us now, were it not that they still fear the faces of other men more than they love the truth. But perhaps fewer would have examined their own hearts, and found out the sin, if he had dealt *courteously* with all.

If your purpose holds, and you make preparations to journey abroad, I will ask of you one thing. Delay your departure for a little. Do not set out for Rome, and for Roman Gaul, and perhaps for still unconquered Britain, until you have given yourself more time. Time to examine your own mood, if I am right in thinking it a mood. Time for me to write to you of things which I must now withhold. Time for other and better men to tell you what it is beyond my power to tell.

You wish to spread abroad the tale of the Galilean's teachings, of his manly courage, and of the manner of his death. Wait a little. He may have shown more than manly courage. He may prove to have been more than man. Do not set out with a half-finished tale to tell.

XLI

PRIVATE NOTE. DATED 22. NISAN.

*Adaiah ben-Daniel, to Rabbi Yusuf Ha-Kayyaf (Caiaphas),
High Priest at Jerusalem, Greetings and Health.*

WHEN last we spoke together, there was need of discretion. There is still need, though my tidings are of the best. He who brings this to you may be trusted.

We spoke of many things, among them of the strange state into which the Lord Procurator Pilate has lately fallen. Physicians have no remedy for the disease called Suspicion.

No man knows the cause, or knew it until today. I believe *that I have now discovered it—may the God of Israel be praised! It was easy to say that Pilate could have no cause for fear. It was hard to tell, until today, what had put fear into his Roman heart. I believe now that the answer to our questionings lies in the one word—Rome. At most in two words, whereof the second is—Capri.

I had tidings this morning from Italy. As I have said, good tidings.

There was lamentation in Israel when Tiberius Cæsar drove our kindred from Rome, banishing many to hardship in Sardinia, the rest to hardship he knew not and cared not where. All Israel knew that this was done by the whisperings of the Lord Sejanus. We prayed for a judgment upon him.

The Lord Sejanus still prospers. He shouts aloud his orders, where once he whispered. He still speaks in Cæsar's name as if it were his own name. Rome trembles, thinking that his power is eternal. Such is the folly of the Gentiles. But the Lord God of Israel will not bear with folly for ever.

Many of the children of Israel still live, or live again, in the city of Rome—as they live in a hundred cities from

which the Gentiles have framed laws to banish them. My good tidings come from Rome. They are written in our sacred Hebrew, and worded with much care.

They bring tidings that demand equal care. They tell me that we are, or may be, on the brink of strange things. If we take counsel wisely, and act swiftly, quitting ourselves like men, the Lord God may work great marvels for us.

If I were a canting Pharisee, I would ask forgiveness for writing this letter upon a Sabbath day. But even a Pharisee would write. You must know my tidings speedily. You may have to act upon them at any moment. You are God's High Priest.

The Procurator Pilate will have had some such tidings as now reach me, and had them earlier. Pilate is Lord in Judæa because and so long as Sejanus is Lord in Rome. If there is a chance of other lords arising there, Pilate must bestir himself to win their favour. He may fear that it is already too late. Such fear breeds suspicion, violence, even madness. The next few months may change this Procurator, until he is not our tyrant, but our slave.

I have said that the Lord Sejanus still prospers and flourishes. He may yet do so for a while. He has vast power, such as even the bestower of it, the Cæsar himself, cannot lightly challenge at a breath. He has long been Captain of the Prætorians, the only men in Italy who are armed and disciplined. There are nine cohorts of them, maybe nine thousand warriors, lodged in the new castle that Sejanus built for them, hard by the Quirinal Gate of Rome. They might turn their swords against Tiberius Cæsar himself if he withdrew his favour too suddenly from their Captain, without cunning preparation. A Cæsar can at any time be proclaimed sick or mad. At least one Cæsar has been murdered by those he counted friends. Capri is an island, guarded by water from the Italy where Sejanus rules, but there are ships along the shores of Italy.

This year, Sejanus was made Consul in the city of Rome

by the wish of the Emperor. Many say that he plans to be Emperor himself, by fraud or by force. He has in him no drop of the Julian blood. But Tiberius Cæsar is old, and has no son living. Sejanus has long known how to master him, and hopes, perhaps, for one last trick of mastery which will end all need to do so. Like all men maddened by power, he cherishes hopes that are both vast and vain.

My tidings are that Cæsar is already weary of the master he once loved. Last month he summoned to Capri the son of his step-daughter, the young prince Gaius—Gaius, whom the armies on the Rhine have already acclaimed for their own, under his soldier-name of Caligula—Gaius, whom the Lord Sejanus hates and fears more than he fears any God. There are more soldiers in the legions of the Rhine than there are in all the Prætorian cohorts of Italy. Gaius is at Capri, and Tiberius Cæsar begins to bestow honours upon him.

These are not tidings of straw. If they were, many straws are blown along by the same wind. It is a wind that blows chill for Sejanus and his friends.

I am informed that they felt the first gust from the Lady Antonia, whose father, the great Mark Anthony, fell in the civil wars between the legions. He was no friend to Israel, but his daughter hates and fears Sejanus, and is teaching her hate and her fear to Cæsar. She is old, but still powerful. Her power grows. So write Jews from Rome, watching the straws fly past.

Cæsar had himself elected Consul this year, colleague to Sejanus. You know by what shams and shadows an Emperor and his favourites rule Rome. I am told he has now resigned his consulship, that he may force his colleague to do the same.

Sejanus has waxed fat by drinking the blood of others. He uses the Roman law of High Treason to purge the city of his enemies. He has gathered a vast herd of spies and informers, meaner blood-suckers whom he pays to feed his pride. He

uses their lying tales to arraign all who oppose him, as Traitors to the State. With each verdict of guilty his own power is strengthened; no judge has yet ventured to acquit his foes. But last month a certain Lord Arruntius was hailed back from Spain, a Province he was governing in ways that Sejanus disliked. He was accused of High Treason before the courts of Rome. Lately and suddenly, the trial was stopped—by an order from Capri. The prisoner was freed, and he has returned to Spain in all honour. Judge whether Sejanus now feels secure.

Judge, too, what fears begin to beset the friends on whom he has bestowed the Governorships of other Provinces, the great Proconsuls such as rule our neighbours in Syria, the Procurators set over such lands as Palestine. All will soon know from which quarter the gusts now blow. All will soon fear lest they grow into a hurricane, sweeping the world clean at last.

Other news is promised me from Rome. May it follow swiftly! If it is tidings of new honours heaped upon Prince Gaius, more Romans acquitted from the charge of Treason, then the end may come swiftly indeed.

Take note, High Priest, and frame your plans in time.

I have not always been able to count on your help and countenance: witness the smaller matter of arresting and punishing the followers of the Galilean—which may yet grow to a large matter and prove me right. In that, you gave countenance to Gamaliel and Nakdemon and other Pharisees, who counselled sloth and security. In this greater business, we shall be as one. You can assuredly count upon my secret counsel, or my open aid.

Pilate is a Roman. His own news from Rome may be reaching him in time to save his life, perhaps his post as Procurator. Warned early, rats leave the sinking ship. But the leaks are still small, and he can hardly yet venture to plunge and swim. For a while he will, more likely, act as rats do in traps. Has he not already begun to do so? He

snaps and bites at his meaner enemies: we must be wary of his teeth. He smiles at others, and may soon be smiling towards Herod of Galilee or us of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin: we must be still more wary of his smiles. If he saw advantage in it, he might even begin to favour the outcasts of Galilee, of whom I spoke. That must be foreseen and prevented. He is more likely to seek favour in Jewry by turning and rending the scum of Samaria, whom all good men must hate. *That* we can forward and encourage. The hunt is up, and our richest quarry already runs haltered by his fears. We can make use of those fears to trip others whom we pursue.

Let us meet soon. If it may be, tomorrow. Tomorrow's morrow may see the glimpse of dawn. We must be ready for it, ready to do God's work, executing His wrath upon all His enemies. Farewell, High Priest of God.

XLII

OFFICIAL LETTER.

*Philintas son of Philintas, Secretary-in-Greek to His Highness the Tetrarch of Galilaia and Peraia, to Aristoxenos, President of the Academy of the Nine Muses at Kaisaria Palaistinê,
Greeting.*

I WRITE by order of His Highness the Tetrarch.

His Highness desires the assistance of your Academy in a matter of research and enquiry (Natural Philosophy).

I am not authorised to disclose the nature of the proposed investigation.

His Highness desires you to send immediately, to this town of Jerusalem, a man fully trained in the observation of natural phenomena, particularly in the statical and dynamical

properties of all material substances, including Stone, Vegetable Products (spices, etc.), Woven Cloth, and the component essences of the Human Body.

The chosen investigator should, if possible, have some acquaintance with Juridical Theory, particularly with questions of the Admissibility and Inadmissibility of Evidence. His report on the matter in hand may have to be submitted to legal and even political authorities.

His Highness does not stipulate the school or system of Natural Philosophy to which the investigator should belong. This is largely immaterial. But His Highness would prefer an expert adhering to some well-recognised order of opinions such as that of the Stoics, or of the followers of Epicurus.

On the other hand, His Highness desires me to say that it is of the first importance that the chosen investigator should be:

- (a). NOT a native of this country.
- (b). Unattached to any local party or political organisation.
- (c). Without specific allegiance to any temple, cult or priestly institution, and without such strong private convictions as might prejudice his judgment in an investigation which is likely to have important religious applicabilities.

(The customary recognition of the cults of Dea Roma and Divus Cæsar are naturally unobjectionable, and should not be included in the above prohibition.)

- (d). Entirely without relatives, and without private and local attachments, either in this city of Jerusalem or in the Tetrarchy of Galilaia.

His Highness hopes to provide the man chosen with a Roman military escort for his journey. He desires you to make application to the Chief Centurion of the VIIth Cohort (Legio X) at the Claudian Barracks, on the South Quay, Kaisaria Palaistinê. Such escort will ensure not only the

safety of the investigator during the journey, but also his protection from undesirable contacts.

During the investigation he will, however, reside, not at the Roman Prætorium, but at His Highness's Palace in Jerusalem, where he will remain until he has drawn up and delivered his report on the questions presented to him.

You are desired to treat His Highness's instructions as urgent and important.

I, Philintas, wish to add a personal stipulation—you can call it (*e*). Please send someone who can *ride*. The last man, the one who came to Sepphoris about the bath-water for the Palace, fell off his horse four times on the road, and had to lie up for a week, in bandages, before we could get any work out of him.

Farewell.

XLIII

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM SCYTHOPOLIS
(BETH-SHAN) A.D. III. NON. MAI.

C. Mutius Trebonius, Military Tribune, to His Excellency
the Procurator, Pontius Pilate, Respects and Greetings.

I TRUST I am not fallen from favour!

I got, by hearsay, the news that our IVth Cohort was not yet marching northward for Syria. I got the official order for my own journey, unescorted, and by a new route. I got no such charming note from Your Excellency as those to which I am now growing accustomed, to explain the change in plans, and wish me god-speed. When Jove suddenly begins to issue his bare commandments, unaccompanied by words of comfort, we poor mortals search our consciences, with fear and

trembling, and wonder what we have done to deserve the impending thunderbolt from Olympus.

I send to Olympus, nevertheless, my respects and even friendship. I send them from this curious town of Scythopolis, first stage on my journey north towards furlough, bustards and good company by night. I wish I knew how it came by its Greek name—city of the Scyths. The people here look as Jewy as they do in Jerusalem. They have tales of a famous witch in this part of the world, haunting a neighbouring village called Endora, and putting a spell on some old Jewish king, who was then killed in battle and nailed up to one of the city gates. Perhaps she caught the invading Scyths with another spell, turned their hair black and hooked their noses!

Forgive my light tone. You may be angry with me already and now think me impudent. I may even have done something to deserve your anger, quite unwittingly. That would be no light matter for a young officer of the Xth, who only strives to please his superiors.

I cannot think how such misfortune can have befallen me, unless some busybody has deliberately made bad blood. Has that pernicious someone spread stories about what happened just as I was leaving Jerusalem? Has he twisted it into a tale that I am plotting with that equally pernicious potentate, the Tetrarch of Galilæa, whose servants, in your last and friendly letter, you ordered me to shun?

I couldn't shun the cross-eyed son of an Armenian bitch who came sneaking up to me, just as we were starting out through the Damascus Gate, to push a letter into my hands. He whined to me for money, and he got a good hard kick, just where it hurts most. The letter went into my despatch-satchel, and stayed there, forgotten, till we reached Scythopolis. Of course it isn't from Tetrarch Herod himself. These stinking Orientals always work behind a stalking-horse. It's from a fellow called Chuzah, his steward, or minor-domo, or chief pimp. I'm sending it back to you at once, partly because

that's clearly my duty, partly because I don't want any unnecessary smell in my travelling satchel.

You'll see it begins with the usual regimental flattery. We of the Tenth are getting tired to death of the stale old 'British' gambit. As if we didn't know that it was one of *our* standard-bearers who first jumped out on to British soil, all among the scythed chariots—as one of us will do again, when Tiberius Cæsar sends us where Julius showed the way! The whole topic has got so hackneyed with us that we don't like the local monkeys jabbering to us about the 'conquerors of the Hesperides'. I'd like to send some of 'em there, when I hear them grumbling about what they call cold and wet in Palestine.

I can't make much sense of the rest, except that Herod seems to want you to do something about a cemetery in Jerusalem. I think he is hoping for some sort of guard or picket of Roman soldiers—more dirty work for the poor old Tenth! It may be to preside over one of their religious tomfooleries, and prevent 'em from slitting each other's throats in order to decide whether their god likes corpses to be embalmed, or prefers them left to rot quietly in the ground. I saw some of that kind of nonsense in Egypt, though there's less throat-slitting there than there is in this crazy country. But I may be entirely on the wrong track. I learnt something about path-finding in Illyria, but not the sort to guide me through the jungle of master Chuzah's letter. You may have someone at the Prætorium, more learned than myself, who can find a track through it.

Of course, it must represent the old provincial manœuvre, oblique-march and envelopment of Prætorium through the Governor's private friends. I wish I felt as sure I still have your friendship as the writer seems to feel. I suppose spies have told him I was dining last week with you and my Lady Procula—by kind invitation from Olympus, before the thunder began to mutter. I can hardly reinstate myself from ~~aftr~~, or repay your great kindness, except by sending you

warning not to be enveloped by the flatterers' march.

I shall soon be able to do a little more to regain favour. When I reach the mountains, where fat bucks wait and bustards run across the paths, you shall have a packhorse-load from the other Cæsarea—Philip's place under Hermon. They say there's lion about there this year: good sport—though it's hardly meat for my Lady Procula's larders! You shall have the easier and more edible game.

Accept my respectful good wishes for her ladyship and yourself.

I'll obey instructions, and steer very clear of Herod's folk while I'm in Galilee, and Philip's when I'm beyond it. If it isn't intrigue with the locals I'm accused of, but something else I have done wrong, please forgive it, or suspend thunder till I can get back and explain I never meant to. Farewell, Your Excellency.

XLIV

REPORT ON LETTER ABOVE (XLIII). CLEARLY DRAWN UP AT THE PRÆTORIUM, JERUSALEM, WITH COMMENTS BY PONTIUS PILATE (PRINTED IN ITALICS).

IN accordance with Your Excellency's instructions, we have examined the letter sent to you from Scythopolis by the Tribune, C. Mutius Trebonius. Also the letter from the steward, Chuzah, sent therewith. We beg to submit the following report.

I. The former has no bearing on public security. It has not been possible to identify the Herodian agent mentioned therein as accosting the Tribune near the Damascus Gate. The Tribune's lively description of this man, as a 'cross-eyed son of an Armenian bitch', might justly be applied to a very

large number of the agents employed by His Highness the Tetrarch Herod.

COMMENT BY PILATE: *Noted. But are the ones we employ any better-looking?*

II. We are in no position to discuss the Tribune's loss of Your Excellency's patronage and confidence.

COMMENT: *You had better not.*

III. There is no evidence that the Tribune has ever been in contact with L. Septicius Felix, either during the latter's first visit to Jerusalem, when he stayed at the Prætorium as guest of Your Excellency and the Lady Procula, or during his last few days of detention here, since his arrest at Joppa. On this matter Your Excellency's recently awakened suspicions appear to be quite unfounded.

COMMENT: *My suspicions are never unfounded. It is your duty as investigators to discover foundations. The fact that Trebonius makes no mention of the contact, and you donkeys cannot trace evidence, is sufficient proof that the two of them have something important to conceal.*

IV. The enclosure forwarded by the Tribune is, as described, a letter from the steward Chuzah, clearly acting under some sort of instructions from His Highness the Tetrarch Herod. Nothing else is clear.

The steward is of Galilæan origin, but writes in Greek, which he has presumably learnt to *speak*, after a fashion, from some unskilful tutor. He has not learnt to *write* it. The outcome of his attempt to do so is an impenetrable obscurity. The letter has now been submitted, for further study, to our linguistic expert in the city. But full elucidation is not expected.

It contains, as the Tribune writes, all the customary flatteries, repeated with the customary insistence. We cannot share the Tribune's opinion that it is an attempt at persuading him to ask some favour from Your Excellency. It reads, rather, as if it were written under the false assumption that the Tribune was still under orders to accompany the

IVth Cohort of Legio X, Pretensis, on its march to Cæsarea Palæstina, for the resumption of its standard, etc. . . . The writer was evidently in ignorance of the change of orders, whereby the Tribune is proceeding to Scythopolis and Cæsarea Philippi, without the previously ordered divergence to Cæsarea Palæstina.

• It is not clear what the man Chuzah, or his master the Tetrarch, wish the Tribune to do in Cæsarea Palæstina. They appear to ask for a semi-official application to Legionary H.Q. for the detailing of an escort from the capital to Jerusalem. The Tetrarch evidently wishes to summon here some person or persons of whose services he supposes himself to be in need, and to isolate him or them, during the journey through Judæa and Samaria, from possibly embarrassing contacts on the high-roads. Outside his own Tetrarchy, His Highness presumably considers (rightly) that such contacts can only be obviated by travel under Roman military supervision.

His Highness the Tetrarch is no fool. His steward may be. We humbly venture the opinion that the letter was written under ill-defined instructions from the Tetrarch, but neither seen nor approved by him. It may misrepresent his real intentions.

COMMENT: ? 'Misrepresent' or ? 'Disguise' ? *If your humbly-ventured guesswork is correct, we might do well to supply some such escort from the Jerusalem garrison. That would at least give us a chance of discovering what game the old fox is playing.*

V. The aforesaid intentions appear to be in some way connected with the miraculous event alleged to have occurred recently in the Cemetery outside the Ephraïm Gate.

Your Excellency will remember receiving (and, very properly, refusing) a request from the Jewish Sanhedrin for assistance in instituting an Enquiry into the whole matter. It is known that the Sanhedrin has recently established contact with the wife of the steward, Chuzah, who represents herself as an eye-witness of the alleged portent. But the

whole connection remains obscure, and is likely to do so until further evidence is obtained.

COMMENT: *Very obscure. So much the better. I want to hear no more about this so-called miracle. Positively—no more!*

VI. We have ventured to describe the Tetrarch Herod as 'no fool'. The description is an obvious under-statement. As Your Excellency knows, he has an extremely tortuous but an extremely penetrating brain. He has had the wisdom to maintain an unbroken outward show of loyalty to Rome and the Divine Emperor, accepting the humble position assigned to him under Roman Suzerainty. But this attitude undoubtedly conceals many hopes of fishing in troubled water for an increase of his own power.

In all such schemes he is gravely hampered by his name, *Herod*, and by the hatred it has inspired in so many sections of the Jewish people since the reign of his father. He is further hampered by his own excessive secretiveness or over-subtlety (which, besides frequently defeating its own ends, unfits him for the making of any fresh and effective appeal to the masses). If it were not for these two serious handicaps, the Tetrarch Herod would need to be watched with even greater care than we now devote to his case.

The matter in hand cannot yet be connected with his more important intrigues, on which a full report was submitted last month. But we would beg Your Excellency to keep in mind that we then provided ample evidence that His Highness the Tetrarch is attempting:

- A. To establish contact with certain *Persian* notabilities and even with high officials of the *Parthian* monarchy, now controlling the *Persian* Empire.
- B. To exploit his known contact with persons of influence at Rome, particularly with those in the household or employment of the Consul, *Ælius Sejanus*.

COMMENT: A. *Let him! He'll burn his fingers.*

B. *Still more, let him! I happen to know that he'll burn more than his fingers.*

VII. It is possible that the simulated interest in the events at the Jerusalem Cemetery may have no connection with the above-mentioned major intrigues, A. & B., except in so far as it may provide a blind or cloak. It is even impossible to be sure that this interest is entirely simulated.

His Highness the Tetrarch has often shown what may be a genuine concern for Natural Philosophy. He has maintained an occasional correspondence on the subject with Greek and other Academies. There was once some question of his providing financial assistance to such an Academy at Cæsarea Palæstina, though the project naturally lapsed when an actual gift of money was expected from him. His Highness is an Oriental.

When Your Excellency temporarily transferred to his jurisdiction the Galilæan prisoner, around whose subsequent burial the present rumours have arisen, the Tetrarch is known to have questioned this man closely (before sending him back for sentence to the Prætorium) on the subject of certain super-normal powers attributed to him by his adherents. These included the power of resuscitating persons apparently dead. The Tetrarch is said to have demanded an exhibition of some such super-normal powers. He did not order his return from the Palace to the Prætorium until it became clear that the prisoner was unable, and possibly unwilling, to satisfy the demand.

This unexpected element in the Tetrarch's interests is at times so strongly marked that His Highness may possibly be acting upon a sincere intellectual curiosity in the recent events at the Cemetery. Indeed, with persons of so peculiar a stamp, it is impossible to say where artfulness ends and some sort of sincerity may begin.

COMMENT: *I know Herod. As I have already said, I want to hear no more about the Cemetery.*

VIII. LAST-MINUTE ADDENDUM. (With reference to III., above).

A fresh report has just been received from agents com-

missioned (by Your Excellency's orders) to report on the possibility of suspicious contacts between the Tribune Trebonius, the detainee Septicius Claudius Felix and the jurist or lawyer, P. Cæcilius Secundus, now temporarily resident on official business in the environs of Jerusalem.

No such suspicious contact is discoverable. The aforesaid agents have, however, reported that the young Tribune, before leaving for Scythopolis, paid a short visit to the villa on the Joppa road at which the lawyer Secundus is in residence. His purpose appears to have been merely that of handing in a letter with the request that Secundus should deliver it, upon his impending return to Italy, to a young lady with whom the Tribune is contemplating marriage.

The report in question deals more fully with the contact between Secundus and Felix. This connection appears to be an equally natural one, though maintained through the clandestine channels which Your Excellency instructed us to leave open, and to watch. Septicius Felix has, as Your Excellency knows, requested the lawyer to make formal application to Your Excellency for a release from detention, and, if this is refused, to refer the whole case to the law-courts in Rome. Your Excellency is reminded that Septicius Felix holds full Roman citizenship.

COMMENT: *I thought so! Send me the whole report immediately.*

Every word of your foolish summary suggests to me that the triple contact is exceedingly suspicious. All letters for Italy, whether or no they are nominally addressed to green-sick young girls, must be intercepted and submitted to me forthwith. Instead of sending an occasional bungler to nose round that villa, you will now establish a permanent watch on the place, and on all who enter or leave it. The fact that it is some miles down the Joppa road—the first stage towards Rome!—is in itself suspicious.

It may interest you to know that the lawyer Secundus has asked me, some days ago, for an appointment, presumably to make the application you mention. There is no need for me to

give him one. I have my own plans for settling the case of Septicius Felix, whose Roman citizenship is not going to protect him from the consequences of his obvious intrigues against myself. But I shall probably grant Secundus an interview, if only to see him again with my own eyes, instead of having to rely on written reports from my gullible subordinates. If he breathes one word to me about referring the Felix case to Rome, he himself will very quickly be in detention. Do I make myself clear?

The third party in this intrigue, the young snake Trebonius, whom I once unwisely took to my bosom, must now be watched with extreme care throughout the period of his furlough in Galilæa and Ituræa. If necessary, we shall have to apply, discreetly, to the governments of the Tetrarchs Herod & Philip, in order to ensure the closest possible supervision of his movements.

I need no further evidence for what I intend to do in the case of that trickster and parasite, Felix. Watch his two accomplices, but leave me to make my own private arrangements about the man himself.

I trust I have now made myself QUITE clear.

P. P.

XLV

OFFICIAL LETTER.

Aristoxenos son of Aristippus, President, Rector and Comptroller of Studies in the Academy of the Nine Muses, to the Secretary Philintas, Greeting.

WE have received your letter.

I and my colleagues observe with regret that your master the Tetrarch appears to imagine that the study, contemplation and teaching of divine Philosophy is a matter of such

small import that any one of those who have devoted their lives to so glorious a pursuit can, without long warning and without sufficient cause or motive shown, interrupt the soul-cleansing procession of our arduous days in order to engage in examining other, unspecified and possibly discreditable matters of merely terrestrial significance, and to assist persons who are unacquainted with our preoccupations, untrained in our methods and careless of our aims to unravel perplexities—possibly of their own ignorant contriving—in which the sacred cause of Learning is not immediately implicated.

In short, we are few, and our task is great and exacting. Our first impulse, upon the reception of such solicitations as are contained in your letter, was to turn the deaf ear of wisdom to the distracting noises from your outer world, and fix our attention even more closely upon the only themes that merit the attention of the rightly-balanced mind.

This resolution was fortified by the thought that any relaxation of studies might well displease our beloved patron, the Procurator Pilate, bestowed upon this country by his Divine Majesty the Emperor, and that we can certainly not proceed in the matter without his permission, nay, his command to do so.

Were such a command to reach us, it would be accompanied, we feel sure, by an assurance that the matter which is exercising your master the Tetrarch is of sufficient importance to merit our attention, and also by the Lord Pilate's gracious permission to apply that attention in a manner and at a time of our own choosing, best suited to the demands of the various curricula of our Academy.

The Tetrarch's request is followed by a somewhat impertinent reminder, added by you, secretary Philintas, of that former occasion on which we were able to assist your master (in our earlier days, before we had the patronage and protection of the Procurator) in the matter of equipping his Palace at Sepphoris with a proper supply of bath-water. We

would remind you, in turn, that our decision to give you this aid was taken at a time when the Tetrarch Herod was making various proposals and promises relative to a grant of moneys from the revenues of Galilaia to support the great and costly enterprises of enlightenment upon which we were then embarking. Those proposals have not yet been fulfilled, those promises remain unredeemed. No money has yet reached our coffers.

Were there a prospect of any such fulfilment, were any portion of the aforesaid revenues to be made available (as they should long ago have been made available) for the furtherance of the arts and sciences in this country (which stands in much need of them), then the Council of this Academy might more easily be persuaded to submit your letter, and your master's request, to a second and possibly more favourable consideration. Among the cardinal Virtues observed and cherished by our members, enjoined daily upon our pupils, Gratitude holds a high place.

If such re-consideration should become likely, there is indeed one among our number at the Sacred Academy, less overburdened than the rest with important preoccupations, who certainly meets the somewhat peremptory stipulations suggested by the Tetrarch and even the extremely impertinent condition you have presumed to add on your own initiative. But there can be no question of our sparing him from his present labours, and so increasing our own burdens, shouldered in the cause of Learning, until the matters of money, upon which I have touched in this letter, have been settled to our own complete satisfaction and to the glory of the Sacred Muses.

Farewell.

XLVI

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM SEPPHORIS.

Hosea, high steward for the Prince Herod, sends greetings and good health from the Palace of Sepphoris, Galilee, to his well-beloved wife, Joanna, in Jerusalem.

I SHALL not return as soon as I hoped. The business on which His Highness sent me to Galilee proves more troublesome than His Highness expected. He himself is detained in Jerusalem by some investigation of which I know little, and will write nothing to you. I send letters to him on the business in hand, and one, by the same courier, for you, my dear wife.

It is pleasant to write for once in our own tongue. Not in the Greek His Highness now demands.

My business has taken me eastward down to Tiberias and the lake-villages. It was, as always, exceedingly hot there, especially for one lately come from Spring in Jerusalem. I have had many of my old fevers. Up here at Sepphoris, I am free from them again. Praise be to the God of Israel!

From Tiberias I went, as I say, to the lake-villages. I had rents to collect in Capernaum and Magdala, a contract to offer in Bethsaida Julias. Many of your friends, lately in Jerusalem, are now back in their homes. They send you their greetings.

You would be wise to break with those friends. I do not command you to do so, though it would be my right as a husband. I love you, and am sure you will soon do so of your own bidding. The sooner the better.

Their story in Jerusalem was wild. In Galilee they spread an even wilder story. Some of these folk, I believe, are truly ~~ruining~~ mad. Remember, my dear wife, of what affliction

you were once cured. Remember that not all cures are lasting. God keep you and give you His wisdom.

I had forgotten to warn you, speaking of Capernaum, that Simon Peter bar-Jonas and John bar-Zebedee purpose to return to Jerusalem at once. You can easily avoid them. They can hardly come into his Highness's Palace. Do not you go to the places where they lodge.

The girls here keep the rooms well-swept. They send greetings. They do not know when to expect the Lady Herodias, nor whether she is still among the Samaritans.

Once more, my love to you. Farewell.

XLVII

PRIVATE LETTER FROM P. CÆCILIOUS SECUNDUS,
LAWYER, TO L. SEPTICIUS FELIX.

SHAME on you. You promised to come to supper, and you never came. Sentence is passed. You must pay costs, to the last farthing, and no small costs either.

This is what I had ready for each of us: A Lettuce. Three snails. Two eggs. Barley water. Wine sweetened with honey and cooled with snow. (You'll certainly have to put the snow into the account, yes, right at the top of the account: it melted on the tray.) Olives. Beetroot. Gourd. Shallots. Plenty of other things just as sumptuous. You could have heard a comedy, or had poetry read out, or a lyre played, or (such is my generosity) all three. But of course you were at someone else's house (I don't know the name), preferring his oysters, chitterlings, sea-urchins and Spanish dancing-girls.

You'll pay the penalty for that, and I shan't say what the penalty is. You've behaved disgracefully. You've done a bad turn, if not to yourself, then to me—yes, to yourself ~~too~~.

What fun we could have had! How we could have laughed together, and learnt together! No doubt you could get a more sumptuous supper in plenty of other houses. But not such a jolly one, straightforward and carefree. Try me once—and if that wouldn't make you get out of other invitations for my sake, I don't know what to say.

Good-bye.

XLVIII

UNFINISHED LETTER. UNSIGNED AND UNDATED.
ADDRESSED TO ROME. APPARENTLY FROM A
MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN, OR SOME LAWYER
OR SCRIBE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THAT BODY
IN JERUSALEM.

*To the merchant Gershom ben-Joash, under care of the freed-
man Alityrus, of the household of her ladyship Antonia
Prima.*

YOUR letter has come. Your news is good. You ask news from me, and shall have it.

To us it is not news. We have groaned for five years under Pontius Pilate, and carefully laid up, in the treasury of our memories, all those crimes of his which might one day put weapons into the hands of his enemies at Rome. The Lady Antonia will be glad to hear what I write. God grant that she make good use of it!

I gather further information, and will send it when it is complete. I trust that haste is not yet urgent. Whatever lies ahead, there cannot yet be question of recall or arraignment in the courts. The power of Sejanus can hardly wither so rapidly as to bring Pilate already in danger of the Roman tribunals.

He came to Judæa as Procurator five years ago in 12th year of Tiberius Cæsar. He succeeded to Valerius Gratus, and forthwith showed himself even more evil than that evil man.

He arrived at Cæsarea from the Greek Piræus and had no sooner landed than he ordered his cohorts to march up to Jerusalem, bearing their eagles displayed. Such a thing has not happened since the days when Pompeius stormed the walls in war, and the thrice-accursed Crassus plundered our Temple for its gold.

In peace time, the Roman generals and procurators have forbidden their legionaries to bring graven images into our holy city. Eagles, and all other emblems of the Cæsar they worship, are by custom left at the barracks of Cæsarea, not brought to those in Jerusalem whose walls and towers overlook the very courtyards of the Temple. Pilate broke that custom, defiling our sanctuary, endangering Cæsar's lordship over all true worshippers of God—for no purpose but his own wilfulness and pride.

Such things will be hard to put clearly before the judges in Rome. They will not know what years of battle and suffering Judas Maccabæus and his followers faced, nor what torrents of blood have flowed, since their time, to prevent the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not. Enough that this Pilate risked our raising rebellion against Cæsar (as did the Maccabees against an unclean tyrant from Greece) only to satisfy his whim.

We did not rebel. There are no Maccabees among us now. We sent suppliants down to Cæsarea, a hundred and more of our chief men. They knelt before Pilate five days in succession, and would not take his NO for answer. He lost patience, drove them into the circus, and let loose his soldiery among them with drawn swords. They knelt on the sand, baring their necks for death rather than accept the defilement of their Temple. I believe he would have slain them outright if his own soldiers had not refused, for very shame, to slaughter suppliants. Their supplication was

grudgingly accepted. The eagles departed from Jerusalem. But the evil did not leave Pilate's heart.

Rather it increased. Thwarted pride festers. He brought images of Cæsar into the Holy City, filled his own palace there with idols of the god whom Romans worship—the god Tiberius at Capri, whose high-priest was Sejanus! Again there was tumult, and much fear of revolt. Even the Tetrarchs Herod and Philip begged Pilate to cleanse his house. They demanded to see Cæsar's edict authorising any such worship of Cæsar in Jerusalem. He was obdurate, until (you will remember) we made appeal to Capri itself, and Cæsar countermanded what Pilate had ordered, without warrant, in his Imperial name.

The bloodshed began later. Pilate seized on money to build an aqueduct in Jerusalem. It was sacred money, from the Temple Treasury, which may not lawfully be used for water, or for any but a sacred use. Thousands gathered in and round the Temple, besieging the Prætorium with outcry and lamentation. I say 'besieging', but all were unarmed. Pilate bade his soldiers dress themselves as townsfolk, but with swords and daggers beneath their gowns. Then he loosed them cunningly among us, by twos and threes. At a signal, he bade them stab and stab. Hundreds were slain.

Thus the Treasury of God's Temple was robbed, and the aqueduct arose, bringing water past Siloam. When a tower of it fell, crushing many to death, Pilate laughed. He hates our race.

About the same time, he sent soldiers into the Temple to arrest one whom he hated. It was at one of our Feasts of Tabernacles, and there were certain men in Jerusalem who had come from Galilee, where Pharisees and Zealots keep alive the embers of the Maccabæan fire. These Galileans resisted the armed soldiers. Their blood was mingled with the sacrifices, around God's holy altar.

Rome is cruel. Her judges will take little heed of accusations of mere ruthlessness to provincials. You will know

the Roman precedents better than myself, but I have been told that Governor Verres would have escaped sentence, for all the boasted eloquence of the Roman Cicero, if he had merely robbed and massacred the Sicilians he was sent to govern—not flogged, illegally, a Roman citizen. It will be the task of your advocate to remind the judges that we are not Sicilian cowards. When Jews fight, they fight. Pilate risked rebellion and the ruin of Cæsar's sovereignty in Palestine, by mocking our religion and defying all our customs.

I have said that I will soon be sending matter for other accusations. But my present tale is not yet told.

First—as to money. I doubt not that Pilate has felt as safe in robbing our pockets for his own profit (or that of Sejanus!) as in robbing our God for his water-pipes. In a few months' time he may not feel so safe. Meanwhile a certain great publican, whom I need not yet name, holding a contract on the hearth-tax, went to Pilate last year with, I am told, proposals for filling, not the purse of Sejanus far off, but, more quickly, that of Pilate. You must know that, in the Prætorium here or (more often) in the Palace at Cæsarea, there is an agent for all such transactions, a man of Egypt who goes, at present, by the name of Psammis. It is he who made money for the last Procurator, Valerius Gratus, by means of female slaves taken from the Parthians. There was then war in Armenia, and the girls were . . .

XLIX

COMMENT ON ABOVE. PRESUMABLY BY AN
OFFICIAL IN THE JERUSALEM PRÆTORIUM.

Good work. The more you can get from us out of that house, the better—so long as you are not caught!

No need to tell me the writer's name. I know the rat. But the names in Rome may be very useful. Isn't Alityrus some sort of play-actor? Can he be Jewish?

Next time, if it can be managed, don't purloin letters till they're finished. The meat of this one was to come. (We might have discovered something interesting about our own rat, Psammis!)

I shall not show your capture to the Procurator in his present mood. But I am sure that, when I do so, His Excellency will appreciate and reward your work.

Fare-well. Steal-well.

L

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM ALBA-FUCENTIA-
APUD-MARSOS (50 MILES WEST OF ROME).

*Marcus Considius Proculus to his dearly-loved daughter,
Procula Tertia, Greetings, Good Health and the Favour of
the Immortal Gods.*

YOUR mother Claudia has just brought out for me your beautiful present of Syrian bronze, which reached Rome safely two months ago, and has since been concealed behind bed-linen in her store-cupboard, here at Alba Fucentia, until my birthday today.

We have been hoping for news of you during the last winter, but received none since the day before Saturnalia, when we departed for Rome, to see the magnificent games provided by our beloved Emperor, Tiberius Cæsar. (I need hardly tell you that we found the games as tedious and tasteless as ever—with a great deal of slaughter and very little entertainment—but we prefer them to Saturnalia in the country, when the slaves get completely out of hand.)

I suppose you have entrusted letters to your cousin Felix, whose return to Italy we have been expecting since January. It is now April, and there is no sign of him. I hope his taste for literature has not resulted in getting him locked up inside a pyramid by some rival poet of Egypt, nor (to put it bluntly) his taste for women involved him in an even more disastrous scuffle elsewhere. You, my dear Procula, have always accepted my *patria potestas* with admirable modesty and resignation: I hope you are by now completely convinced of my wisdom in giving you a solid and trustworthy Procurator of Judæa for husband, in place of an unreliable gad-about like Septicius Felix!

I began to write of my own birthday. We hoped for, and achieved, a fairly complete family re-union, out here at Alba, in spite of certain anxieties and disturbances in Rome, which we do not permit to disturb us in our country villa.

I am sometimes asked how I can bear to live so far out from Rome and never get news or gossip from it until it's stale. I always reply that most news from the town emits a far worse smell when it is fresh than when it is stale and dry!

These disturbances I mentioned appear to be connected with some foolish attempt to drive a wedge into the unwedgeable friendship between His Divine Majesty, Tiberius Cæsar, and my great patron, the ex-Consul Ælius Sejanus, by whose favour Pilate rules Judæa and my dear daughter is first lady in that land. When such attempts are made, it is the wedge which is split, never the oak into which fools may try to hammer it. We hear that the old sorceress Antonia has been tapping at it with her more-than-antiquated hammer. I'm told the haft of that instrument is now of Jewish manufacture. It will splinter none the less for that!

I did not let any foolish gossip from Rome spoil my birthday pleasures. We got more than we expected, more than we wanted, in the way of a family re-union. Your aunt Sancia brought her nephews, both high in the households of Sejanus. Your scape-grace brother Caius turned up

expectedly, bringing, without my leave, two friends of his that had no claim to be received at Alba Fuentia except the bare name of Proculus, which they tack on to less creditable first-names, without proving any claim to kinship with our illustrious forebears.

I would indeed be glad enough if one of the two, a certain Cestius Proculus, could prove some sort of kinship. He seemed to me a modest and right-minded young man, obviously loyal to the present régime in general and my Lord Sejanus in particular. In discussions about the past, he listened most appreciatively to what I told him about the good work I was once able to do for the city of Rome, during my all-too-brief period of quæstor-ship. If the aforesaid Lord Sejanus had then had the full confidence of His Divine Majesty, that period, to Rome's great benefit, would have been far from brief. But it is no good lamenting over the lost chances of the past!

On the other hand, I fear that your feminine modesty would be offended if I expressed my true views of the second creature whom your brother Caius insisted on bringing here to Alba for my birthday. He was a most unpleasing young man, calling himself Volusius Proculus. He has evidently failed to make good in any other walk of life, and has adopted the exceedingly questionable position of a sea-captain in the Imperial Navy—to which the Divine Emperor and his wise counsellor Sejanus seem to consign all the malefactors who might do worse mischief elsewhere. As I told Caius—and with some emphasis!—he might almost as well have brought the clothmonger, Pacuvius Proculus, from whom your dear mother Claudia used to buy her cakes in Pompeii! I do not grudge our name to an honest freedman, even if he is only a baker. I grudged it to this fellow Volusius.

He constantly interrupted me at dinner, and then sat staring blankly and rudely at me when the rest of the company were laughing at my jokes. I will not repeat his attempts at jocularities. Some of them, with a truly nautical

tang to them, made me quite glad that you, my dear child, were not at table to hear them. I am told that Judæa, which your husband governs, is ill-provided with good roadsteads in which officers of the Imperial Navy can find anchorage. He, and you, are fortunate in my Lord Sejanus's selection of a Province for him to govern!

Well, I have managed to enjoy my birthday festivities, in spite of the temporary annoyance of this uninvited guest. (I say temporary, because I packed him off that same evening, before supper, telling him to rejoin his trireme at Ostia and not impose himself on honest countryfolk of our sort.) Your Syrian bronze was presented to me with the oysters which were a prelude to that supper. Rid of the one intruder, the whole company of Proculi and Proculæ and quasi-Proculienses gave a most gratifying reception of applause to my short speech of thanks and welcome. I thought that three quarters of an hour was a sufficient contribution of oratory, however good, to such an informal family celebration. I went to bed early and well-pleased.

I am, in truth, singularly free from disquietudes and anxieties (with one exception), and all the more free to send to you, my dear daughter, my most heart-felt wishes for a similar feeling of security.

The one exception is—or ought to be—a mere trifle. It's your mother's habit (which I used to think that you, my dear Procula, were going to inherit from her) of dreaming all kinds of disasters ahead, and thinking she ought to warn other people about them. Ever since Lupercal, she's had it in her head that one of my birthdays is going to be a disastrous time, for me, and therefore for the whole family.

Nothing I say seems to make any difference. She's been going about like a child expecting to be whipped, and looking as white as a sheet every time a courier comes up the drive with letters, especially official letters, from the direction of Rome. I did everything I could to set her mind at rest about the future. I made very careful notes of the flight of hawks,

owls and even pigeons, using two separate tablets for birds on the left and birds on the right, that is, as one looks down from the east portico over the valley towards Alba. I hauled up your old Moorish friend Tulax, from the slave-quarters, and kept him on our tiles all night, watching for shooting stars. I even sacrificed a speckled hen to the Lares, and went over all her entrails for the slightest sign of a bad omen. I found none. But all these reasonable common-sense measures haven't satisfied your poor dear mother. She went on thinking that yesterday was going to be some kind of mourning-day for the whole family, until the sun was right down behind the hills. And, though that sent her to bed a little happier, I know I'm going to have all this trouble over again next April—and the April after that.

If you can think of anything to say in your next letter which might do her good, please say it. Strangely enough, Claudia seems to take more notice of some of your sayings than she does of mine.

. . . Just to show you what I mean! I've had to break off writing because your mother came in and began to worry me, almost to scold me, about the sea-captain Volusius, and the way I packed him off to Rome early this morning. She kept on telling me that we can't afford to get on the wrong side of scamps like him, and I couldn't stop her talking. The fellow obviously has an evil tongue—he'd probably lay information against his own mother if it would gain him promotion!—but what can he do in Rome against me? My conscience is clear.

I must stop, after that interruption. This letter is too long already. I didn't mean to write at all until we had heard from you again, and I shall keep the rest of the news till we do. Your cousin Felix might turn up any day now, and he's sure to bring letters from you. Meanwhile here's the news of the birthday feast, and many thanks to you for the bronze figure.

By the way, what exactly is it meant to represent? When

your mother first unwrapped it, I thought at first it was a camel. But she is sure it's a greyhound. Do dogs have necks like that in Syria, or is it just the artist being wilful? I never know, these days. But it was very good of you to send it, whatever it is.

Give my respects to Pilate. Accept your old father's love for yourself. Farewell, my dear daughter. May the immortal gods bless and preserve you from all harm!

LI

REPORT. SUBMITTED TO PONTIUS PILATE BY
SOME SUBORDINATE IN THE PRÆTORIUM.

*Daily report. Hired Villa now occupied by P. Cæcilius
Secundus.*

IN accordance with Your Excellency's instructions, a close watch is still being maintained. Three men divide the day and night into 8-hour shifts.

No visitors are reported during daylight yesterday. The lawyer SECUNDUS spent part of the morning in the vegetable-garden and herbarium, directing three of his slaves. He did not otherwise emerge from the house until shortly before noon, when he rode down to the main highway, and turned eastwards towards JERUSALEM, presumably on official business.

About an hour later, a tradesman from NEPTHO (Lifta) delivered three mule-loads of fire-wood (the lane to the highway is unsuitable for wheeled traffic).

After the eleventh hour, shortly before dusk, SECUNDUS returned, from the direction of JERUSALEM, apparently in some haste. Soon after, lamps were lighted in all the principal apartments.

At dusk itself, a small party, coming from JERUSALEM, along

the highway, was observed to turn off into the lane leading to the villa. This lane descends into a dip and crosses a small water-course, now dry, before mounting to the entrance gates of the villas. Our two observers (the evening watch had just arrived at the concealed post to relieve his predecessor) saw the above-mentioned party descend out of sight into this dip. Sounds of a considerable scuffle were then heard, a few shouts, and the noise of horse-hooves, as of some larger party, rapidly leaving the lane through the olive-groves and fields stretching towards SCOPUS (Shafat).

Our two men descended towards the water-course, with all such promptitude as was compatible with secrecy. They found the lane untenanted, and no signs of any unusual occurrence except a short fragment of wooden pole, iron-shod, apparently broken off from a spear-shaft.

Both men are positive that their own presence and approach were unobserved, and cannot have exercised any influence on the unexplained events at the water-course.

The villa remained brightly lighted inside until the IVth hour of night, when all lamps were extinguished.

There was nothing further to report before dawn today.

COMMENT: *Noted.*

No action.

P.P.

LII

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM MANAHATH.
NICODEMUS TO JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

*Nakdemon ben-Gorion to his friend Yusuf of Ramathaim,
God's Blessing and Good Health.*

I HAVE returned to my vineyards, not liking what I heard and saw when I came for a few days to Jerusalem.

I am sorry that we did not meet. The servants at your house said that you were away. Are you making preparations for your long journey to Ultima Thule?

I feel constrained to write again. I have not had answer to what last I wrote. I do not know in what mood it found you—or left you, when you had read it. I would not have you depart without a second letter. Perhaps I shall venture to write what I withheld from you in my first.

Meanwhile, I laugh, gently—as you, too, may laugh—at the talk I had in Jerusalem with a colleague of mine upon the Sanhedrin. He can remain unnamed. He is of the Sadducean persuasion. Hence the talk.

It concerned the matter of which I wrote before, and confirmed what I then said.

There has been talk in the Sanhedrin about the After-life. My Sadducean friend singled me out, in private, to tell me how strongly he disagreed with our belief in it. He told me, as you did, that he wanted no such life beyond the grave. I told him once more that it did not matter what he wanted: nothing mattered except what he was going to get. I will not say he gobbled at me, but he was angry enough. He told me that centuries more of life would only be tedious, and an eternity of it intolerable. I could only smile again, wondering why the Lord God of Israel should be commanded (forgive the blasphemy: it was his, rather than mine) to govern the universe in accordance with men's fear of tedium. Is truth to be sought by seeking what we desire, shunning what we fear?

I told him, more gently, that death might so change him that he could face and even rejoice in an eternity. (You will remember what our late Teacher told the Sadducees, that, in the hereafter, we shall neither marry nor be given in marriage—a great change, judging by most men and women that I have known!) My angry friend snorted and said that if he were so changed, he would not be himself, and it was therefore idle to talk of his resurrection. I smiled again, and

thought to myself of the vast changes he had already gone through in forty short years, since he was the eager boy I once knew—the boy whom this old and weary lover of mere phrases must still look back at, and call ‘myself when young’. I hoped, for his sake, and that of others, that death may be our recapture of youth, the beginning of new and better changes, fitting us, perhaps, for eternal and ever joyful growth.

Enough of all this. It may mean little to you, who are wiser than he, and have not forgotten your youth, as youth is too easily forgotten after years of sad monotony round the council-table of the Sanhedrin. I will only say that I made no answer, and left him in snorting certainty that he was the victor in our little controversy. He is welcome to his victory.

You will have heard what matters now vex the Sanhedrin. The affair of the sepulchre is one of many anxieties, and not the greatest. The Council has announced that Galileans made a midnight assault upon it and stole the body by violence. The tale remains unproved, unlikely, and unbelieved. The whole matter has done some slight damage to the reputation of those rulers of the Temple who marked down for death him whom they accused of blaspheming against it. It might soon be forgotten, if the mystery of it were not now taken up into the greater darkness in which grope all the many rulers of this poor country.

Pilate slinks and stabs in his blindness. Herod has sent away the shabby tigress whom he unlawfully married, and himself stays in Jerusalem to weave new plots. All hate and strive against each other, and yet fear that soon they may need each other’s help. There was a time when I wondered why men so greedily seek power to govern other men, to the peril of their souls and the loss of all their peace and freedom on this earth. I am older and wiser now, knowing that to such questions there is no answer.

I believe that there is good in Herod, as in the worst of us,

as perhaps in Pilate! He has at least a kind of thirst for truth, though he seeks strange cups wherewith to quench it. He has summoned a Greek to Jerusalem, one trained in observing Nature, measuring her petty steps and reasoning out the principles of her mighty march. Such work is harmless, and may be very good. It helps us, at times, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked (until our rulers strip them bare again!) The Greeks have sought out the 'many inventions' of which the Preacher speaks in our book of Ecclesiastes, and drawn some profit from them, for themselves and for other nations. They seek to draw wisdom too, and maybe have done so, in some sort. But it can only be the wisdom of this world. They learn a little by studying God's handiwork, yet miss more, forgetting to worship God.

You, I take it, will pay little heed to this test of what happened at the sepulchre. The Greek may be bought or frightened, speaking as Herod, or Pilate, or our own rulers, desire him to speak. He may, on the other hand, be both honest and brave: the Greeks are a strange race. But what can come of his measuring, and weighing, and pondering over, what he finds in the tomb? Is God a prisoner at the bar, to be judged or acquitted by the testimony of learned witnesses? What can Natural Philosophy teach us about a breach in Nature's own laws? I am myself persuaded that such a law was so breached, there at Jerusalem, on the night after the third Sabbath of Nisan. My belief cannot be shaken by those who prove by measurement and investigation that the thing could not happen. It will not be strengthened by any report, based on like evidence, that it has happened indeed. Herod might as well call up an apothecary from some back-street in Tiberias of Galilee to tell him whether Pilate is truly growing mad or growing more dangerously sane. I trust that you, in your belief or disbelief, are at least at one with me in this.

Once more I write with hesitancy and delay, leaving the great point untouched. You may agree with me in rejecting

testimony which cannot prove or disprove what is most at issue between us. But you will ask, 'Where, then, must I turn for proof?'

You will never find proof of such a matter, however far you may wander across the world of men. But if you direct your steps aright, and your thoughts aright, you may find a better kind of certainty.

You wrote to me of your desire to travel. The servants told me at your house that your preparations proceed apace. I do not know if your purpose is to leave Judæa by ship from Joppa or Cæsarea. If your plans are not yet hardened, will you listen to my counsel? Will you go north by road and spend some weeks, or even months, among the hills or by the lake-side of Galilee? You could return from there to our harbours, or go down to Ptolemais of Galilee and take ship there. You will lose little by the short delay and you might gain much indeed.

You know something of what you will find in Galilee. Much fertile land and many thriving cities, where men can gather good store of money—more than can easily be gained on the rocky mountain-sides of this Judæa. Men grow rich there, but they come to Judæa to spend and enjoy their riches. They come, not only to worship at the Temple, but also to find Learning, Courtesy, wiser words spoken with a voice less harsh and boorish, money spent less often for boastful display, more often for refinement and for charity. So men journey southward, to Jerusalem, and are content to stay here, if their money suffices. Will you, whose store is more than sufficient, make a contrary journey in search of other things?

During my short and recent visit to the city I had news of the dead Teacher's followers—by what means, I will not set down in writing. Those closest to him during his life (and who are now best witnesses of his rising-again) are by birth Galileans. Most of them have gone back to Galilee. They did not go in fear of persecution. They no longer fear what

men can do to them. For all I know, they will return soon, perhaps for our Feast of Weeks, which Herod's Greek would call Pentecost. Meanwhile, they had bidding, from the Teacher's own lips, to go back to their homes.

They are not rich. Rather they are of those whose toil enriches others in Galilee but leaves them to their hard life. They are unlearned, as are most Galileans, in spite of the schools and synagogues which we of the Pharisee persuasion have laboured to multiply in their villages. They are simple, as you said (and repeated more than once) in that letter of yours which first set me writing to you.

Simple? Are you still in the mood which made that word seem almost contemptuous on your lips? Will you turn hard eyes upon this letter if I write of their simplicity as touchstone for truth? I spoke to you of my own learning—once my boast—and of the time when I saw it shrink and dwindle to nothing, in Galilee, by candle-light, behind closed doors. It was then that I learnt something about simplicity.

I should have learnt it before. For many years it has been my duty, here in Jerusalem, to attend in Court while judges and lawyers examined witnesses, upon whose word hangs a man's reputation, his livelihood, perhaps even his life itself. I have thereby learnt one lesson, and have heard many judges and lawyers repeat it among themselves. Were I myself in jeopardy of sentence, and innocent of the crime imputed to me, I would be far more afraid of error from wealthier witnesses, men of experience and some learning, than from the truth which for the most part becomes manifest when the poor and simple speak.

I begin now to write of that which I withheld from you in my last letter, fearing that you were not yet ready to receive it. I am without means of knowing (since you have not answered) whether even now I write too soon. Perhaps I do worse mischief, hardening what Time could make softer. But you are going on a far journey, and my time is short.

You wrote and asked me to help you dispel error, here or

afar, among the poor and simple. In my answer I made bold to speak of your pride, the pride that made you boast of serving God without hope of reward in another life. I am perhaps prouder and more sinful in other ways. But this much I can at least say. Do not turn to me, to my learning and experience, in hope of finding truth to guide you through the mystery which now confronts us both. Turn to the poor and simple. Do not fare forth to spread abroad an unseasoned wisdom which you have found only in a great city, only among the lettered, only in the houses of the rich.

Take first this little journey that I spoke of. Galilee is smaller but nearer than Italy or Spain or Britain. Naaman, Lord and Captain of Syria, was not cured of his leprosy by bathing in the great Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus. He remained a leper until he listened to the servants who bade him wash in our little Jordan, and be clean.

You will find rough voices and rough hands in Galilee. You will find many men who have seldom seen farther than the shores of the little lake through which Jordan flows. They may have made all their living by the strong-smelling fish they haul out of its water, and never hoped for anything beyond the next good meal and another sound night's sleep. They are simple. They speak little Hebrew, only the Aramaic jargon of their Galilee: they barely understand what we read to them in their synagogues. They speak, perhaps, less Greek, and laugh in ignorance at the word Philosophy, natural or unnatural. But they know that Death is evil, and that Life is good—even such hard life as we and our like condemn them to live. They do not groan at it, as we groan at our easier lot, imagining, sinfully, that we want no more life. They do not look forward to a swift coming of Death, sighing for it as a release from tedium. They do not hasten that coming, more sinfully, as do the Romans and their philosophers, lying back in the warm baths of their luxurious villas, and slitting *p*.p veins to dye the water with their blood. Such a seeking of death is to them the worst of all horrors. They

hear and bear witness that their master has Mastered death. And they rejoice.

They know that you, and I, and their womenfolk laid him dead in your sepulchre, while they sought shelter from those who might have crucified them too. They know that before three days were past the tomb was empty and he was alive again. They seek to know no more.

Go to Galilee. Walk among them. Walk humbly. And the God of Israel guide your footsteps.

LIII

DRAFT FOR OFFICIAL LETTER.

Pontius Pilatus, Procurator for the Divine Cæsar, Tiberius Augustus, in the Province of Judæa, sends greetings, health and prosperity to the Most Excellent Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilæa and Peræa.

It has been brought to my notice, most excellent Tetrarch, that your great interest in, and munificent patronage of, that Natural Philosophy in which the Greeks excel have led Your Highness to ask assistance in an investigation from the Grecian Academy at Cæsarea Palæstina, where I, as Procurator, am customarily in residence, to which, as Procurator, I hope to be shortly returning.

I have also learnt, in somewhat perplexing fashion, that, some days earlier, one of your servants made clumsy approaches to a certain Roman Military Tribune, a young man once in favour with me, with a view to obtaining an escort of Roman soldiers for a philosopher whom Your Highness, in the most admirable warmth of your zeal for enlightenment and learning, was about to summon from Cæsarea Palæstina to this city of Jerusalem. Indeed, indeed,

my lord Herod, you need not have started upon such a winding path in order to reach so easy a goal!

Your Highness must surely know that my friendship for you is such that you have only to express a wish—directly to me, not through servants and *quondam* dependants!—and I will be only too grateful for an opportunity to gratify that wish. What could be easier for me than to send an order, haste-post-haste, to Cæsarea, for the detailing of any number of men at the barracks—lazy rogues with less than enough to do!—to fall in behind the worthiest and most discreet of their Centurions, and so form a trustworthy guard for any apostle of Learning who is setting forth upon the road for Jerusalem? What could give me greater pleasure than to do this little thing in the name of the great friendship I bear, and shall always bear, towards Your Excellency?

Please do not hesitate, on any similar occasion, to send your request to me, in plain, blunt words. It will be answered with plain, blunt deeds, cementing the happy union between Your Excellency and myself, your servants and my soldiers. If at any time you should hesitate to ask aid from me in such a matter, you will drive me to suspect (alas!) that this union of interests is an imperfect one, and that Your Highness has aspirations or purposes which Your Highness wishes to conceal from me. I would be reluctant, indeed, to entertain so extravagant a suspicion.

To anticipate and prevent any hint of disunion between us, I have already despatched a swift courier down to Cæsarea, with order to offer the needful escort for any member of the Academy whom Your Highness has seen fit to summon to Jerusalem, or, if such a member is already on the road, to overtake him and (may I say?) overwhelm him with all such friendly assistance and protection as shall make his undertaking my own most welcome responsibility.

I could hardly do less. If you desire more, more is at your service. ♀

LIV

NOTES. THE ABOVE DRAFT (LIII), THOUGH CAREFULLY WORDED, DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SATISFIED PILATE. THE FOLLOWING NOTES, EVIDENTLY ADDRESSED TO HIS CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY, WERE SCRIBBLED ON THE BACK.

I. This will have to be re-drafted. I'll dictate another letter. Herod is not only a very nasty piece of work, but also, unluckily, an intelligent one. He'll see through this, unless we make up a new draft a little less obvious.

II. Remind me to include something about young Trebonius. He needs watching, up in Galilee, and Herod's people might help.

III. A letter will have to go off tomorrow to Cæsarea Palæstina, ordering that old donkey at the Academy to send his man up, money or no money. Just at present, everything must be done to keep Herod happy—curse him!—and this fad of his looks fairly harmless.

IV. See that I'm not bothered with any more police reports about this dead body they've found in the quarry at Scopus. It's not a political matter. There's no evidence that the fellow was a Roman citizen. They admit themselves that the body was stripped of every shred of clothing and the face so hacked away as to make him quite unrecognisable. Not that his face would be any loss—I mean if it *was* the fellow Septicius Felix; that's what they are evidently trying to make out, just because they've failed to trace him at Joppa, where I shot him off as soon as I'd released him.

My own theory is that Felix sneaked off by back lanes and got away clear to Cæsarea or Ptolemais. He'd hardly be such a fool as to make for Joppa again, after his arrest there, and detention. Anyway, as I say, there is no evidence, and I

don't wish to be troubled with any more reports. See what you can do to put a stop to further investigations. I don't want to have to prevent the police authorities making fools of themselves, as they generally do. They nose into too many matters which don't concern them.

V. My lady Procula wants to dictate some letters. You can go to her early, while I'm settling the cases in court, but bring me her letters to look at, when you come to deal with mine.

VI. Tell someone to find out what the Sanhedrin is doing about this Greek pedant whom Herod is whistling up. I believe they're still keeping their own men round the cemetery, and he won't get into the tomb without leave from their bearded Reverences. I wish I knew why there was so much fuss being made over the whole business! We may find out something about it from the Centurion in charge of the pedant's escort.

VII. Dinner will be an hour earlier tomorrow. If any post comes in from Rome, send the man in to me at once, whatever I'm doing—dining or listening to music, or even sleeping things off. Yesterday's delay was intolerable. *Everything from Rome is urgent at present.*

LV

PRIVATE LETTER.

P. Cæcilius Secundus to C. Mutius Trebonius, Greeting.

THE humble man of law greets the glorious man of war.

You will excuse my writing to you on such slight acquaintance. I know you only as one who came to my house and asked me to take a letter to Rome. May I now ask you if I

may regard you as one who will do one or two commissions for me in Jerusalem after I am gone?

I purposed, as you know, to leave Judæa in a fortnight's time, sailing from Cæsarea Palæstina. I have already left it. I write from Ptolemais in Galilee. I mean to sail as soon as possible, after a short talk with you, if you will grant me one, and if it can be arranged. I will come up into the mountains, if need be.

Many things have happened in Jerusalem since you left it. Many more may happen there, or at Cæsarea Palæstina, before you return from furlough—things in which I am most eager not to be involved. I am glad to be beyond the borders of Judæa, in the jurisdiction of a native Tetrarch, not a Roman Procurator. There are some matters in which citizenship, a sound knowledge of the law, and a very considerable reputation as an advocate are no protection whatever against danger.

You will hardly understand me. It is for that reason I write to you. You are young, a soldier, without political ties or influence at Rome. You are (or so you told me a fortnight ago) a friend and favourite of the Procurator. In every way, a man of whom he could not entertain suspicions. I know no one else in Judæa of whom I could say the same, no one except you upon whom I might not be bringing some danger even by merely entrusting to him the perfectly innocent commissions of which I have spoken.

The man who brings this will be able to arrange with you how we might meet. I have bargained for a passage here on a ship leaving for Italy in ten days' time. I shall feel safer spending some of those days in the hills. I can even hunt, as you are doing. I shall bring some of my legal notebooks with me, and also a poem I am writing. You will, I trust, find me calmer than I feel down here at Ptolemais, and a more interesting companion—even for a young soldier who prefers wild boar to poetry.

I shall go inland to Sepphoris tonight and await the return

of my courier there. I am told that it is a small town, and very quiet while the Tetrarch Herod is away at Jerusalem and his Palace largely unoccupied. Also it is halfway towards the meeting place in the mountains which I hope you will appoint.

May I wish you good sport in the meantime? Also the best of luck in your career? I trust you will keep to it. Soldiering is safer than politics, or even (as I now find) than the Law. Please believe me when I say that I do not wish to, and shall not, involve you in either of the latter tangles. My commissions are few, simple and short. When you have discharged them, you can forget about them—and about me, unless at any time I can do you some service at Rome. That I shall always be most pleased to do.

Farewell.

LVI

OFFICIAL LETTER. DATED FROM JERUSALEM.

The Scribe Salathiel, secretary to the Council of Ten in the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, sends greeting and respects to His Highness the Tetrarch Herod of Galilee.

THE Council instruct me to inform Your Highness that it has now discussed the proposals for an investigation of certain events alleged to have taken place in the cemetery outside the Ephraim Gate shortly after Passover.

Your Highness must be aware that full investigations have already been made by the Sanhedrin, which has accepted the conclusions formed by its appointed representatives after the hearing of many witnesses. It is not apparent that any good purpose will be served by re-opening enquiry, and the Councillors are most reluctant to do so. The original

rumours of unusual happenings should never have been permitted to spread. They have been completely silenced now, and it is hoped that no more need be heard of the matter. To re-open investigations is to give a new lease of life to them, and possibly to other and more undesirable absurdities. The Council begs Your Highness to reconsider his whole project in the light of these undesirable truths.

If Your Highness insists on proceeding further in the matter, the Council feels that it would be put in the unenviable position of appearing to resent and resist enquiry, and of facing the imputation that its own previous findings were not entirely exhaustive or impartial, that, in short, some attempt was being made to conceal or distort evidence. The Sanhedrin would risk any damage that might result from so ridiculous an accusation, and refuse all idea of further enquiry, had it not received Your Highness's assurance that the project has the additional support of His Excellency the Procurator. A letter is now being sent to His Excellency, in order to verify the fact of that support, and to ask whether it could not be withdrawn. In the event of a favourable answer, the Council will not feel itself obliged to grant the co-operation Your Highness desires.

In view of the contrary possibility, and the decision to re-open investigations, the Council instructs me to mention the following grave objections to the methods suggested by Your Highness.

1. The introduction of a foreigner, apparently as director of the whole enquiry, though it may give a specious air of impartiality to the proceedings, will be attended with the most serious disadvantages. The man named, the sophist from the Greek Academy at Cæsarea, is (we are informed) of wholly irresponsible and even atheistical opinions, untrained in the laws and customs of this country, unconnected with any party or section of its inhabitants, and probably unsympathetic towards their loyalties or aspirations. If enquiry

were necessary, it could hardly be put into the hands of anyone more unsuitable or unsafe.

2. The man Sosthenes is apparently being brought up from Cæsarea under a Roman military escort, and Your Highness suggests that the soldiers of that escort should be present when the entrance to the sepulchre is unsealed and its contents examined. It is hard to understand what purpose could be served by the introduction of a second foreign, and military, element. During the former enquiry it proved quite unnecessary to remove the seals from the sepulchre: sufficient evidence was obtainable in other ways. But its exterior, and indeed the whole cemetery, was satisfactorily patrolled and picketed by members of the Temple Guard, under orders from the Sanhedrin, who were able to assist the enquiry by pointing out the spots where they had been stationed on the day after Passover, and the methods used by their armed assailants to drive them away and carry off the dead body of the criminal. Their testimony can be repeated, if needed. Their presence in the cemetery during the new enquiry may be desirable. That of Roman soldiery can do no good whatever.

3. Your Highness makes no provision, in the suggested plans, for the presence of a representative from the Sanhedrin. Such a representative will be appointed, and the Sanhedrin insists that the Doctor or Scribe chosen must accompany the man Sosthenes in all investigations, and be given the fullest freedom to verify, revise or controvert the findings of the Greek.

4. Your Highness has already allowed public statement to be made of his intentions. In the opinion of the Sanhedrin, nothing could be more unwise. Further publicity might be disastrous. The whole matter of the alleged supernatural occurrence was sequel to the prompt suppression of what might have been an extremely dangerous conspiracy both against the Jewish religion (to which Your Highness has frequently expressed his devotion) and the Roman Imperial

Authority (to which all in this country are obedient). If it had not been so suppressed, the danger would undoubtedly have spread to Your Highness's own Tetrarchy of Galilee, to which the confederates have since, apparently, retired in impotence—in order to escape punishment rather than to spread disaffection. It has been, and remains for the present, the considered policy of the Sanhedrin to withhold such punishment, to disintegrate the movement by ignoring it, rather than perpetuate the nuisance it represents by paying too much attention to its possible minor repercussions. That policy has so far been successful. It will be maintained as long as possible. But it will not be possible to maintain it at all if the present unwise insistence produces a new enquiry, if that enquiry is allowed to provoke public discussion and the spread of new rumours, and if such discussion or rumours puff new life into the now dying embers of a fire which the Sanhedrin has all but extinguished.

My Lord Tetrarch, you have been warned.

LVII

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM THE PRÆTORIUM,
JERUSALEM. COSS. TIB. SEI.

*I. Manlius Vulso sends much health to his fellow Tribune of
the Tenth, Mutius Trebonius.*

THANKS for the buck and the bustards. His Pontiousness the Procurator left for Cæsarea Palæstina yesterday morning. Your express pack-horse came in before nightfall, but the game would have been too high, even for Pilate, if we had sent it after him to the coast. That, anyway, is what has gone down on the daily report. We dined well after writing it.

We drank his health but wept no tears over his departure.

Nor would you, if you knew what has been happening at the Prætorium since you rode away on furlough, you lucky hound!

He went off, in some haste, five days before his usual schedule for Passover-visits. He gave no reason, except that Jerusalem was quiet. I can guess at one of his reasons. Down at Cæsarea he will get news from Rome two days earlier—three if the Samaritans happen to be kicking up riots in their villages or if a courier finds better wine than usual in Sebaste. What in the name of Hades is happening at Rome—or going to happen?

You'll see I've dated this letter with a Coss. Tib. Sei., but rumour has it that there are now another pair of Consuls or Vice-consuls. We were all asking what the resignations mean. Is Sejanus going to be made dictator or something, I mean, just for Rome, while His Majesty remains at Capræa? It's all guess-work, anyway, but I suppose Procuratorships—and the promotions of Procurators to Proconsulates—depend on one guessing right! Congratulations can make a man, if they are sent in time; they look a little suspicious when they arrive late.

Talking of that, have you heard the old joke from Capræa? His Majesty the Emperor was receiving official condolences from every city in the world on the death of his son and heir. Condolences were arriving extremely late from Novum Ilium, once known (and burnt) as Troy. Back went a grave message from Capræa, condoling with the town-councillors on the death of their illustrious fellow-citizen—Hector! His Majesty has a good sense of fun. I can't help wishing sometimes that he had a good heir.

The Procurator was right in saying that Jerusalem was quiet. Damnably quiet. We yawn our heads off in the Prætorium, now that he isn't here to bite them off, two or three times a day. We have had one good joke to keep us alive. It came from Herod, of all people.

Herod's been skulking up here at his Palace long after his

usual time for getting back to his own Tetrarchy. One never knows what particular kind of kettle of fish he's cooking, until the stink from the kitchen begins to seep out under the locked door. Meanwhile he's amusing himself—and others!—with one of his religious or philosophical fads. You know how he always manages to keep one swivel-eye on the Holy of Holies and one on the lecture-halls where Greeks bleat. He's brought a Greek up to Jerusalem—as if we hadn't far too many of 'em already!—and brought him, if you please, with an escort of men from the Tenth, an escort he wheedled Pilate into ordering up from Cæsarea. The amusement seems to have begun with our men choosing out the quietest horse they could find for him, and the schoolmaster fellow falling off it three times between Sebaste and Cophna. Our Centurion came in this morning with a report on the journey, and of the first day's proceedings at the cemetery, which also had to be conducted under Roman military supervision. We needed something to laugh at, with heads and stomachs both a bit uncertain—after last night's buck, bustard and Bacchus. We got it.

The whole thing seems to be vaguely connected with that rather mysterious affair in which another of our Centurions—was it Longinus?—nearly got himself into serious trouble. Now I come to think of it, it was you who helped to get him off lightly, so you are more likely than I am to remember the details of the case. It was a crucifixion, if I remember right. Well, now it seems to be a matter of where the corpse is—or isn't. The tomb in which it was supposed to have been laid is quite near the Calvary rubbish-heaps, where sentence was executed. Apparently it's been sealed up for weeks, partly because that pack of old rogues in the Sanhedrin wanted to prove something about it, partly because no Jew likes disturbing anything that has to do with dead bodies. Their ideas about what they call 'pollution' would make a Vestal Virgin look unclean!

Well, our poor Centurion has to strip off the seals and get

the stone door rolled back along its groove with a chattering little Greek pedant on one side of him, and a thundersome Jewish Rabbi, bearded to the waist, launching disapproval from the other. You can imagine what happened when the whole party ducked heads and went inside. To quote our man's report, "An extremely firm attitude on my part was necessary. Otherwise the dissensions between the various natives would have prevented me carrying out my orders and ensuring proper investigation." One wonders whether the 'firm attitude' meant a crack or two with a *pilum* across somebody's shins!

You can read the whole report when you come back. I had it taken down verbatim from what the Centurion said. The first part is the best. He began to lose patience when 'proper investigations' proved to mean several hours of poking and prying and measuring things. But he tried to be tolerant even about that. "I had to remind myself, sir, that the fellow was born a Greek and brought up a school-teacher." Not a bad summary. I only hope Herod enjoys reading the result, which will probably be a cart-load of paper, with two pages of quotation from Aristotle to every one of commonsense.

Well, that's the only news to date. I hope you'll bring us back some good stories from Galilæa—something better to talk about than the chit-chat of Jerusalem. If you manage to run down to Damascus and see some of the Proconsul's men, you may be able to tell us whether Syria's really expecting a war with the Parthians, or whether it's all the usual fairy-story. You can guess which we want. *Pax Romana* is no doubt pleasing to the gods and their Imperial colleague at Capræa, but a little *bellum Romanum* would provide his soldiers and Tribunes with some badly needed distraction. Crucifying Jews is a very poor substitute for knocking a good archer or two off his horse.

I'd better stop. I'm beginning to yawn. We had great sport last night, but it was the kind of sport that makes one

want to follow up a morning's desk-work with a good sound siesta. You're luckier. One can hunt all day, sleep till dawn on brushwood, and be ready for another twelve hours of stalking, throwing and thrusting—at wild boar, not Rabbi's shins! Good luck to you. My next furlough isn't till autumn, worse luck! But I shall look forward to having the laugh of you then, when you are back among your pens and daily reports and feather-beds. Unless—by that time—we're both splashing through Euphrates with Parthians shooting at us. Farewell.

LVIII

PRIVATE LETTER. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA TO RABBI NICODEMUS. DATED FROM NAZARETH.

He has risen.

LIX

LETTER. DATED FROM JERUSALEM, AND DESPATCHED TO THE PALACE OF THE PROCURATOR, CÆSAREA PALÆSTINA.

Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, to His Excellency Pontius Pilate, Procurator for His Divine Majesty, Tiberius Cæsar, in the Province of Judæa, Greeting.

It would be discourteous in me to say that I was anything but deeply disappointed to hear that you have already left Jerusalem. It might seem equally discourteous to remind you that you have apparently done so in complete forgetful-

ness of the most gracious letter whereby you invited me to dine with yourself and the Lady Procula some weeks ago, and also of your second note, in which you kindly repeated the invitation and made it more definite for the day after tomorrow.

Your Excellency will remember that I replied to that second note, deploring the fact that my dearly-loved wife, the Lady Herodias, having been called away to Sebaste on important affairs connected with our Tetrarchy, was desolated by the thought that she was missing an opportunity for a meeting and a renewal of loving friendship with the Lady Procula. In the same note I also told you that I myself was only too glad to seize my similar opportunity for meeting and dining with you, sharing the good fare and the excellent entertainment which, I am told, is always provided for guests at your Prætorium, and perhaps exchanging with you a few brief words concerning more important questions which are much more easily laid to rest in conversation at table than they can be in formal correspondence.

I cannot tell how soon I shall be returning to my Tetrarchy of Galilee. When I do so, I shall hope to reach Sepphoris by way of Cæsarea Palestina, to halt convoy there, and to recapture, by a visit to the Palace which my father built as King and you now occupy as Procurator, the chance of discussing with you all the many matters which concern, confirm, or might possibly threaten our respective positions as appointed Governors in the two divisions of that great realm which he once ruled over by undivided sway.

Meanwhile, you are, no doubt, pre-occupied and distracted by the many cares and anxieties which must accompany your enjoyment of the Procuratorial power, by the many problems which your governance has engendered, by, perhaps, the present and puzzling news from that city of Rome whence you draw your power to govern. The humblest, the most ignorant* of your subjects must feel sympathy with Your Excellency in your present grave difficulties. I, who would

claim to be humble, but cannot without false modesty suggest that I am altogether ignorant, share that sympathy in full measure. I must at least recognise that a kindly offer of dinner to an unimportant Tetrarch might easily be forgotten amid the pressure of all the other matters which demand a Procurator's attention—reports on the regrettable discontent in Samaria, reports of the equally regrettable intransigence of my Jewish fellow-countrymen (within or without the Jerusalem Sanhedrin) and (possibly the most disturbing of all) reports of the recent happenings at Rome. Please believe me when I say that I can freely forgive any trivial lapses of memory occasioned by such diversions of interest: that I fully understand the cause, and the irritating perplexities which result from it: and that I shall follow with the closest attention Your Excellency's most interesting methods of combating your present difficulties, in full consciousness of the very important consequences of Your Excellency's success, or failure, in so momentous a combat.

Since I am meanwhile denied my expected opportunity for discussing major problems with Your Excellency in person, it might be as well to speak of two minor affairs.

Your Excellency kindly mentioned the matter of the Military Tribune Trebonius entering my Tetrarchy without any authorisation from me, with intention to make inroad upon our wild livestock with his spear and bow. If I have interpreted the affair correctly, Your Excellency will not be surprised or displeased to hear of the rash young man being involved in some kind of hunting-accident, possibly with fatal consequences. I feel sure that it will make no difference to Your Excellency (and might save me from some minor embarrassments), if such an accident did not occur until he had passed just over the mountain frontier into the territory of my brother, the Tetrarch Philip, where the hunting is sometimes particularly dangerous. This may involve a slight delay in the occurrence of the accident which Your Excellency desires, but it will enable me to make sure of not mis-

interpreting Your Excellency's wishes. Also of not misinterpreting Your Excellency's rather vague promises about a *quid pro quo*, a similar favour that I would like you to manage for me. But I would rather talk about that when next we meet, not put it down in writing.

The favour Your Excellency has already done me, by providing military guard for the philosopher from Cæsarea, has, I fear, been wasted. The fellow began his work satisfactorily, though he refused to give me any report on it till he had finished. He was living here in my Palace in between whiles, and I left him to his own devices. As far as I can make out, he started some monkey-tricks with one of the women—as a matter of fact, with my steward's wife, while her husband was away in Galilee. She introduced or sent him to some of her disreputable friends in the city, and he seems to have cut adrift and gone into hiding with them. At any rate, he can't be found now, and may never be found, until he turns up in his own Academy down at Cæsarea. I suspect he is making his way there now, though I cannot imagine what has frightened him. I gave orders for really hospitable treatment, and added a little flattery about his importance and his learning, which I imagined would please the little rat more than any hospitality. But we seem to have mishandled him somehow. Anyway, he's gone. If Your Excellency hears any news of a peripatetic pedant turning up somewhere between here and Cæsarea, I'd be most obliged if you would have him sent back.

Your Excellency must have passed through Sebaste on your journey down. I am told that the Lady Herodias is still there. I hope Your Excellency had no ill reports on her behaviour among the Samaritans. I have been—how shall I put it?—rather less fortunate in my marriage than Your Excellency. But, in our journey through this wicked world, we cannot all expect so excellent a travelling-companion as the Lady^aProcula. Please give her my greetings and compliments.

Accept the same for yourself.

Please believe also that I am sincere in hoping to meet Your Excellency soon. I expect to be returning to my own Tetrarchy, by way of Samaria, in about a week's time.

Once more, greetings and respects.

Farewell, Your Excellency. If you can come to agreement and co-operation with me, then it should not be farewell for ever.

LX

DICTATED LETTER. DATED FROM JERUSALEM.

I, SIMON BAR-JONAS, write by the hand of our brother Philip, who counsels delay, yet have I prevailed upon him to write to our friend in the Lord, Joseph of Arimathea. Know that much was revealed to us at the time of the Feast of Weeks, when many strangers were in Jerusalem, as at Passover, and I for one was persuaded and have come within a little of persuading our brother Philip, and maybe James, the brother of the Lord, that, among other things, it was revealed, I cannot now write by what means, that it is now God's command to us to take the good news we all wot of to countries beyond Galilee, even beyond Syria, countries whereof you, Lord Joseph, know something by reason of your trafficking, and have riches enough to visit, and indeed spoke of visiting to us when we were together in Galilee. You spoke of a certain Britain, which is, I take it, beyond Syria, and I for one did not know what it was you spoke, nor cared, having then many other things to ponder. I see farther these last few days, and, even last night, was vouchsafed a vision that seems to signify long journeys afar, perhaps to this Britain which has crept into your heart and beckoned you towards it. I write to say that I would

most willingly accompany you there, should you need companions, and maybe one companion who has a strong arm and swift sight to see danger afar, and maybe another who speaks Greek as does our brother Philip, now writing this, whom I doubt not I shall soon persuade. We are your servants and will be truly so, if such is your wish, upon any journey which will take the good news to places where it must needs be taken. We await your reply here in Jerusalem, where we are no longer in hiding but now preach openly, whether or no the rulers of the Sanhedrin, or the Roman oppressors of Israel, see fit to allow or to forbid. Our greetings in the Lord.

LXI

PRIVATE LETTER. FROM CÆCILIOUS SECUNDUS, APPARENTLY TO MUTIUS TREBONIUS, WRITTEN SHORTLY AFTER A MEETING IN THE FOOTHILLS OF MOUNT HERMON, ON THE WAY BACK TO PTOLEMAIS. UNDATED.

YOU'LL have a good laugh at this. Laugh away. I, yes, I, the man you've been meeting, have caught three wild boar, and three very fine ones at that.

'Not that fellow!' you'll say. Yes, that fellow. I don't mean that I've completely given up my quiet and lazy holiday. I was sitting down beside the boar-nets. I had no hunting-spear or thrower very near me. I just had my pen and my notebooks. I thought a little, and jotted down a little—so that, even if I had come away without a boar on my hands, I'd have had a full page or two to my credit. You've no business to turn up your nose at my way of getting brain-work done.

It's wonderful how bodily exercise and movement makes

the mind work better. Then, woods all round one, just being alone and keeping very quiet, as one has to on a hunt—all that simply forces one to think.

Next time you go hunting, you may try taking a notebook along with your lunch-basket and your wine-flask. You'll soon find there's good learning to be had on mountainsides as well as good hunting.

Good-bye!

LXII

PRIVATE LETTER. UNDATED.

*Procula, from Cæsarea, to her friend Linnæa at Bersabæa,
Good Wishes and Good Health—to you, to Popilius, and to
the dear children.*

FORGIVE my delay in answering your letter. Much has happened to keep me busy. Forgive a short answer now. Much is still happening.

Pontius and I send our thanks for the Egyptian linen. It was a most welcome present.

I am glad you find contentment at Bersabæa, and that the children flourish. Perhaps they will be happier there than is possible in Jerusalem—or here in Cæsarea.

I would much like to have you here, and the children. But you must not rely too much on anything Pontius said about a post at Cæsarea for your Popilius. I do not know how long he himself may be here, still less what promises he may or may not be able to keep.

I made enquiries about your Milcaia's son. I could learn little, save that he is dead. There are two stories about the manner of his death, and no certainty. Tell her that her Judas lies buried outside the southern walls of Jerusalem, on the slopes of Hinnom's valley.

I must not write more. I hope we will meet again, though it may not be for a long while. I cannot write all that I would.

Pontius took fever a few days ago, soon after we came down from Jerusalem. He is gone into the hills. He will be back tomorrow. Before he went, I watched him take and eat an apple at dinner. He cut it all into very small squares before he put any of it into his mouth. Have I said enough?

I have often envied you, and others, the sound of children about the house. Perhaps that Power is wise which left me and Pontius childless.

Greet your husband from me. And Popilia. And Popili-culus. I hoped to send the little ones a present each before Parilia, but April is now long past. Perhaps there will be opportunity in the summer.

Farewell. Try to understand.

LXIII

PRIVATE LETTER. UNDATED.

*The Lady Procula Claudia to P. Cæcilius Secundus, Jurist,
Greeting.*

THERE is danger.

I cannot save your friend (if he be your friend), now hunting beyond Hermon. Send him a message by any method you may know. Tell him to go swiftly to Damascus and beg a command in the armies of the Proconsul in Syria. Tell him not to return from furlough to our cohorts in Judæa.

For yourself, embark at once on any ship, small or large, that will take you swiftly on the first stage of your return to Rome.

LXIV

PRIVATE LETTER. UNDATED.

Procula to her dear mother.

I WROTE last week. Pontius is away, as I fore-said. When he returns, I will write again by the next post he sends to Rome. He sends often.

Meanwhile, this briefly. Do not expect the return of Felix. Do not write to ask why he does not come, or, if you ask, do not believe my answer.

He has no parents to grieve over him, as I truly grieve. Next time you leave Alba Fucentia for Rome, seek out a certain young friend of his, and give her what comfort you can.

I wish I could be with you at Alba. I wish I could be back there as a young girl, playing with a young Felix. But life is not made of wishings.

Farewell, dear mother. May Heaven keep you and my father safe. I learn to trust in Heaven's purposes. What else is trustworthy?

Once more, farewell.

LXV

COVERING-NOTE TO LXVI. DATED FROM THE
ACADEMY OF THE NINE MUSES AT KAISARIA
PALAISTINÊ.

Sosthenes to the Rector of Studies, Greeting.

I PROMISED you a personal note describing my experiences, and then the formal Report on my work at Jerusalem, which

you could send to the Tetrarch Herod or to our patron the Procurator. On second thoughts, I feel sure that the latter will not be at all interested. I doubt if the former will like what I shall and must write. I am still in doubt about the Tetrarch's motives in asking our co-operation, and more in doubt about the spirit in which he is likely to accept the results. Tetrarchs can be very tetchy, if you will excuse the pun. Finally, my own personal experiences had considerable bearing on the enquiry for which I was commissioned, and I have repeatedly had to mention them, sometimes at length, in the annexed Report. It would be tedious for both of us if I tried to write them down twice.

The only phase of those experiences that has had no bearing on my findings was the last and worst. After my escape from Jerusalem I had a most uncomfortable and yet costly journey back to Kaisaria. (My expense-sheet is attached to the Report.) I had to take every measure to avoid attracting attention, and was successful as far as Sebaste. There my great reputation as a scholar had evidently preceded me, and I was given a most embarrassing welcome by the Lady Herodias, resident in that city for the present. Tetrarchs' wives can be even harder to deal with than Tetrarchs.

I had soon learnt, up at Jerusalem, what the Jewish Sanhedrin desired me, well-nigh commanded me, to discover at the sepulchre. I was never sure what my Lord Herod wanted—except that, in some twisted fashion, I believe that he wanted the truth. But his whole mind is so twisted that I doubt whether he knows the truth when it is presented to him.

His lady wanted a dozen different things, all incompatible with each other, and appeared to think that I was going to sit down, there at Sebaste, and incorporate them all into a Report written under her immediate orders. She is a woman.

When I told her that I was a philosopher, not a political hack, I was subjected to a bewildering alternation of indignities, blandishments and threats. I remained firm. I would

rather have drunk hemlock with Socrates than penned such a medley of errors as the Tetrarch's wife seemed determined to extract from me. Spreading Reason among these barbarians of Palaistinê is a hard task indeed, and maybe a fruitless one. It becomes quite impossible where women are permitted power.

My second escape, from Sebaste, brought me back here in what mood you know. But a philosopher truly devoted to his calling can soon recapture equanimity in that atmosphere of austere but calm ratiocination with which you, my dear Rector and President, endeavour to surround your colleagues and fellow-seekers after the Truth. I soon recovered sufficiently to put myself into the right frame of mind for drawing up my findings in suitable form. I should have done so even more rapidly, if the fish provided rather monotonously for our suppers was not served, with equal monotony, in a damagingly under-cooked condition. (I have already spoken about this in the kitchen, more than once. Can nothing be *done*?) I have now, however, overcome even this obstacle to the physical well-being which is the only basis for mental contemplation and the proper recording of things contemplated. I append herewith the result of my labours. It demands, and deserves, your most attentive perusal.

LXVI

REPORT ON INVESTIGATIONS CONDUCTED AT JERUSALEM.

Sosthenes, son of Sosigenes, learner and lecturer in Natural Philosophy, to his illustrious Rector and colleagues at the Academy of the Nine Muses, Greetings and Truth.

SINCE lately I came from Rhodes to work among you, my dear yoke-fellows in research, I have more than once been

asked to what school or custom of Philosophy I most bear allegiance. I have answered more than once (as surely befits a wise man) that, taught in many schools and myself studying Nature in her more-than-many aspects, I cannot now confess full allegiance to any single tradition, nor own a single master, without betraying my loyalty to the sacred cause of Truth. I taught at Rhodes without bowing my head to the Rhodian Panaitios (as, indeed, I bow to no Stoic). I studied long years at Athens, and kept my mind free of the spell which bewitches so many Athenians, worshippers of Plato and Aristotle. Place and time mean nothing to the true philosopher. Yet, born at Samos, I am proud indeed to be fellow-countryman to the great Pythagoras (though without enslaving myself to all his principles), and I have more than once endured much slander and persecution by following the Samian Aristarchos in one, at least, of his discoveries, namely that it is our Earth which spins and circles round the Sun, not the Sun's chariot (as fools of old imagined) that is driven across a sky vaulted above fixed Earth.

I have said enough to show you, my friends and fellow-seekers, that at least I reject, along with all the ancient myths and imaginations, that great and most clogging of all myths, that Nature is governed by any gods or God. She has her own laws, which it is our pride and privilege to expound to the ignorant. There is no honesty in flattering their ignorance, and winning favour from their priests, by supposing any divine lawgiver, any Person in the likeness of a Greek Zeus, an Egyptian Ptah, or a Hebrew Jehovah, behind the impersonal majesty of the stars. I am a grown man, and leave children to their toys.

This much I had to say, and must add to it that, as the Eclectic I claim to be, I must reject one part of the teaching of Epikouros, again a Samian and my countryman, while believing that another part is the true foundation of all Natural Philosophy. I cannot tell why so wise a man as he, seeing that no gods rule the fate of Earth today, retained the

needless faith in gods afar, creators of Nature and her many forces, but now careless of the destiny of their creation. Yet I acknowledge his mastery in perfecting our thoughts about the nature of all things that we touch and see, a nature built up of atoms too small for touch or sight, for ever combining, dissolving and re-combining in partnerships with each other, as Chance brings them together for growth and nourishment, or Chance forces them apart by water or fire or mere decay.

Thus much for the beliefs—and I would call them proved certainties—which I have held through many years; I took them with me on my late journey to Jerusalem. I found no cause to abandon them, after research into a certain unusual happening in that place.

Here follows my account of that research.

A. Of the journey itself there is little to record. By the favour of our patron, the Roman Procurator, I was provided with an escort befitting my dignity as philosopher, and shielded from all unpleasant distractions upon the road. My meditations were a little disturbed by one thing only—the fact that the soldiers assigned to me a horse of particularly ungovernable motion and illogical mind, which barely permitted me to bestride it and for ever rebelled against my guidance. So poorly had he been trained for obedience to a master that I was occasionally obliged to leave the saddle. This needs mention, as some detractors (whereof I found many in Jerusalem) obstinately maintained that I had suffered damage in body and even in brain, unfitting me for the task I had undertaken. The slander is groundless. I met with no such serious injury on the road.

Arrived at Jerusalem, I was sufficiently accommodated at the Palace which the Tetrarch Herod uses for his visits to that city, and immediately acquainted with the nature of the research which he and others required. Many of these others, unfortunately, were Jews of the local Sanhedrin, steeped in the wilfulness and prejudices incidental to their race and

faith, determined (or so it seemed) to put before me no evidence without at the same time dictating to me the interpretation they wished me to put upon it. I was silent, awaiting facts rather than opinions. In this, the Tetrarch approved of my resolution, and such Romans as I saw were indifferent.

B. Briefly the matter was this. Some weeks ago, on the fifth day before the new moon of Thargelion, the Romans executed a criminal outside the walls of Jerusalem. The procedure was completed before sundown, and certain Jewish friends of the dead man obtained the Procurator's permission to bury his body in a sepulchre situated near the place of execution, that is, a few hundred yards beyond a gate in the north-western re-entrant of the city walls. No witness denied that the body was so disposed of, in temporary wrappings, together with an unusually large quantity of spices and other preservatives against rapid corruption. The tomb was then closed. I found no reason to doubt that all these things had been done, and I was given much evidence to support this first part of the account. Beyond, I found good reason to doubt everything I was told.

It seems fairly certain that on the third day after the execution, the last morning of Mounichion, the sepulchre was found open, and the body missing.

There can be no doubt whatever that it is missing now. A very large number of powerful persons in Jerusalem would be extremely glad to discover its whereabouts. They have indeed made many efforts to do so. They give various reasons, or excuses, for the failure of these efforts. Their contention is plausible, or even probable, if taken in conjunction with the official explanation of the whole affair. But, after examining the evidence, I found none to support such an explanation, and a great deal which made it a plainly untenable one.

C. The Tetrarch Herod submitted to my consideration a suggestion which he did not wish to sponsor himself, but thought worthy of analysis. This was that death had not taken place, that the condemned man had survived the process of execution, and had in some way been assisted to leave the sepulchre by persons outside it. (I must explain it would be quite impossible, even for a strong, and uninjured, man, to effect an escape from the inside).

This suggestion was the most unwelcome of all to my Jewish associates, who were strongly and, I may say, venomously opposed to the idea that the condemned man can be still alive. It is, indeed, an almost impossible explanation, which they were glad to hear me reject on grounds of fact. The sentence was one of crucifixion. It was carried out in the most public manner, by Roman soldiers who could not have left their work unfinished without the gravest risk of immediate detection and (presumably) a similar sentence upon themselves. The whole hypothesis is also open to certain as serious and indeed insurmountable objections as those which invalidate the different account of the matter given by the Jewish priests.

D. This account was obviously inspired by sectional prejudice: the dead man (though condemned by a Roman court for treason against Cæsar) was apparently leader of some religious faction inimical to the interests of the present priestly ring that controls Jerusalem. Their story nevertheless seemed plausible, until tested by the evidence at the sepulchre.

It is, in brief, that certain adherents of the dead man came to the sepulchre by night, attacked or scared away some armed guards whom the priests had stationed there, rolled aside the stone which closes the entrance to the tomb, and abstracted from it the dead body for concealment or burial elsewhere.

Taking matters in order, I naturally asked why any armed

guard had been set. I was told that the dead man, either at his trial or on some previous occasion (or possibly both), had spoken of rising again from the tomb. He seems to have claimed (and may have possessed) some very remarkable powers of healing and of performing other feats which common people regard as impossible. (I myself am a natural philosopher, addressing my report to others equally accustomed to examining the great and undoubted marvels of this Earth, and we cannot allow the word 'impossible' in our vocabulary.) It was foreseen that the man's followers, thwarted and discouraged by his arrest and execution, might attempt to justify this last and greatest claim to miraculous power, by raiding and robbing the sepulchre, and then proclaiming that a resurrection had indeed taken place. This, said the priests, was exactly what had happened. They only blamed themselves for not having appointed a sufficiently numerous or sufficiently wary guard to frustrate the raiders.

After hearing these preliminary explanations, and reserving judgment upon them, I asked for conduct to the sepulchre, and also for silence, and freedom from all comments which might cloud further judgment—except in answer to such questions as I saw fit to put. The latter condition was imperfectly observed, at least in so far as each question released floods of unnecessary verbiage calculated to procure my consent to the official explanation of the mystery, but (I am a Greek, and a philosopher!) powerless to do so.

E. I have seen many Jewish tombs, of varying form and antiquity. Some at Jerusalem, believed to be those of former kings, leaders and High Priests, are built of dressed stone or brick. The one in question—apparently prepared for another and a richer man than him who was laid in it—is cut out of an outcrop of soft rock which here rises in a low but steep cliff above the level of the rest of the cemetery. The face of this small escarpment has been cut away until it is roughly perpendicular. The entrance of the tomb can thus be blocked

by a large circular stone, resembling a mill-stone, but twice or three times the normal size of mill-stones, which can be rolled sideways along a small groove or channel scooped out of the ground at the immediate foot of the rock-face. Two moderately strong men can thus roll it aside, revealing a square doorway some five feet high. This was done, on my instructions, as soon as the seals had been inspected and removed, by two of the Roman soldiers who had been sent with our party of investigation.

The escarpment faces east, towards the city. The removal of the door-stone, during the hours of morning, admits a perfectly clear light into the interior. At the earliest of these hours, it might be dazzling to a man standing inside and looking outward. To one entering, it is excellent for all purposes of observation.

F. I was told by the priests that what I saw, on entering, was exactly what any man would have seen three weeks ago, when the story of a raid and rifling (and the counter-story of a resurrection) first began to spread round Jerusalem; that they themselves had then closed the tomb and sealed its stone; that they had touched nothing and rearranged nothing inside.

I can well believe it. They had surely touched nothing. They would have been wiser to touch and re-arrange much. What I saw, on entering, made their story immediately improbable. The more carefully I looked, and reasoned over all the things I saw, the more improbable did that story appear.

G. Raiders-by-night, whatever their motive for rifling the tomb, would probably have done so in some haste. They would expect the guards whom they had put to flight to return with reinforcements—or at least they would act on such a possibility. They would surely act in fear of other possible interruptions. They would, even more surely, act

quickly. Few men, however hardened by deeds of blood, remain willingly in a tomb, at dead of night, for longer than they need. If they had tarried too long, night would have given way to day, and they might have been seen carrying a corpse, to whatever destination, by the light of dawn. I cannot believe that they would not have worked swiftly to avoid being observed, detected, and perhaps apprehended, in such suspicious employment. Everything in their circumstances must have suggested the need for haste. Everything I saw in the sepulchre suggested that there had been no haste whatever.

Very much the most likely, and the wisest, course would have been to lift the body just as it was, buried in spices and wound round in winding-cloths, and to carry all away, for unwrapping and disposal elsewhere. This would have meant two minutes or less within the sepulchre, a safe journey from it through the dark of night. The raiders—if there were raiders—did not take this course. Some circumstance, hard to guess at, may have prompted another.

The next most likely would have been to spend ten or twenty minutes unwinding the cloths and brushing away the spice, so as to carry off a bare, uncovered body. This would have left the linen in its strips on the floor or in some bundle in a corner, the spice scattered in a dozen heaps. This the raiders had not done. This their priestly enemies, eager to manufacture evidence, had most unwisely omitted to do after them—whether from negligence, or from the superstitious fear of pollution which inspires all Jews with repugnance for things connected with a corpse.

H. In one wall of the tomb a shallow alcove had been hollowed out, making a shelf or ledge of rock some two feet from the floor. On this shelf lay the grave-cloths, with no fold or wrinkle out of place, no grain of spice spilt from within them on the rock-ledge, nor on the stamped earth of the floor beneath. They lay in the exact shape that they must

have taken when they were first wound round a human body, from feet to shoulders. A few inches further along the rock-shelf, on the spot where the head had rested, a large kerchief or napkin was still in place, still wound and folded as it had first been wound and folded round the ears and temples, to leave the face exposed. All the linen had gently subsided as though body and head had been withdrawn—and yet no such withdrawal was possible. It was rather as if the once-solid flesh and blood had turned to vapour and quietly floated away, rising from among the clothes.

I. All this could be seen within the first half-minute after I entered the tomb. I was immediately and most deeply impressed. Nothing that I saw later, by long and close observation, effaced or contradicted that first impression.

Observation was not easy at first, in a small, cramped space into which two Jewish priests had insisted on following me, in order to interrupt my train of thought with their unhelpful comments and intercept my line of vision with their bulky bodies. Fortunately, they were taller men than me, and therefore more cramped, with their heads constantly bruised on the roughly-hewn vault of the low tomb, or bowed to avoid such bruises. I had little difficulty, after a short time, in persuading them to go out into the full sunlight where they could stand erect, and to leave me alone again with the silent testimony of the grave-cloths.

After finishing my observations, I asked that the door-stone should be rolled back into place and new seals set upon it. I spent the afternoon and evening alone, in the room assigned to me at the Tetrarch's Palace, reasoning with myself or (according to the system of Samos) with imaginary opponents in argument. I prompted these opponents to raise every possible objection against all the theories which I might be tempted to adopt prematurely, for fear of clouding judgment about any further evidence that might be sub-

mitted to me. I supposed (wrongly, as it proved) that there would be little such evidence forthcoming.

The Sanhedrin had indeed provided me with a copy of certain records, describing the examination of various persons connected with the whole affair. Though endeavouring to read these with an unprejudiced mind, I was soon forced to the conclusion I had endeavoured not to anticipate—that the witnesses had been carefully selected, and cunningly questioned, in order to prove what the Sanhedrin most wished proven. Proof was to seek, and the wish all too apparent. The whole business was represented as a conspiracy among certain poor persons, mainly from Galilaia (the merchant who provided the sepulchre seems to have been exceptional, being wealthy and a citizen of Jerusalem). The object of the confederates, I was asked to suppose, had been to deceive themselves, and others, into believing that there had been a miraculous resurrection of their dead leader.

After examining, as fairly as possible, the extremely unsatisfactory evidence paraded to substantiate this story, I felt myself, provisionally, compelled to one of two alternatives.

J. Among the alleged conspirators, there might have been one (possibly the above-mentioned merchant) with a far more subtle brain than could be attributed to any Galilaian peasant, and with resources for commanding men of unusual, one might say unparalleled, manual dexterity. Such a man, determined (for whatever motive) to provide evidence of a miraculous resurrection, might have hired experts to strip the body of its integuments and then re-wind and re-arrange the latter in such absolute and meticulous a fashion as to give the impression, even to so acute an observer as myself, that a body had miraculously vanished from within their folds. Such experts were unlikely to be Galilaian, or Jewish at all, but it was possible that Egyptian embalmers might have had the necessary experience and skill. The presence

of such Egyptians in Jerusalem was unlikely, but not impossible: if it could be proved, this alternative would immediately become a more tenable one—with one proviso. They would need not only skill, but *time*. The work could not possibly have been done in less than four or five hours, and would more probably occupy ten, or more. Given all these things, the theory of a conspiracy might yet be substantiated—by somewhat different methods from the clumsy ones adopted in the Sanhedrin. But these things were not given.

The second alternative was that there had been no conspiracy, but a physical event of almost unique peculiarity.

No philosopher, no man except a fool, can survey all the evidence for the occasional appearances of spirits and phantoms of the dead, and conclude that it is based upon complete nothingness. That evidence is desultory, deniable in any single case, dubious in any large collection of cases, often explicable in terms of delusion, hysteria or deliberate imposture. But its vast bulk and universality is too impressive to be treated with contempt. Ghost-stories from every quarter of the Earth, reported among the most primitive but also among the most civilised of peoples, vouched for by unlettered peasants or slum-dwellers but also by acute and highly educated observers—such stories corroborate each other in an extraordinarily large number of details, suggesting that the spirits of the dead can and do appear again, in shapes resembling those they were in life, but shapes no longer subject to the limitations of matter, locked doors, stone walls—or the hampering folds of grave-clothes. Against so vast a mass of evidence, admittedly imperfect, unsystematic, and vulnerable, there is no contrary evidence whatever. There are many ways of weakening and undermining the testimony, but none of opposing and disproving it: there is no proved fact known to Natural Philosophy which makes the appearance of a phantom impossible, or even unlikely.

The matter has not yet been properly investigated. Even

the philosopher Athenodoros of Tarsos, who had such strange experiences in the abandoned house in Athens, made no general observations and comparisons with similar phenomena elsewhere. I have called him a philosopher, but he was a Stoic, incurious where he should have been active, and perhaps reluctant to make discoveries which would have shaken the most cherished principles of the Stoa. It occurred to me, in my first evening of meditation in the Tetrarch's Palace, that Chance might have called me, Sosthenes of Samos, to make the first bold venture into undiscovered realms of Nature, and so put my name immediately where it will one day stand, beside those of my great fellow-islanders, Pythagoras, Aristarchos the astronomer and Epikouros of undying fame. I may even now be on a path which will lead me to a confirmation, and an undreamt-of extension, of that doctrine which Epikouros has spread over the world. If all matter be composed of many atoms, separated by manifold void, both too minute for observation by the human eye, then surely we most need to learn how and why certain solids are not mutually interpenetrable—atoms of one denied passage through the void of the other—until they are melted to liquid or boiled to vapour. It would surely be of immense importance to establish a case in which solids that cannot usually be liquefied or evaporated may penetrate others of equally unchangeable density, a case, to be brief, in which the atoms of a human body may pass through the void spaces in linen grave-clothes, and then through those in the stone walls of a tomb.

K. You, my dear colleagues, will easily recognise the importance of such reflections. I am obsessed with them now, and you will no doubt forgive me, and supply my place, if they force me, in the near future, to withdraw from much of the routine-work of our Academy, for deeper and more uninterrupted meditation.

I was, as I said, inspired to my great task during my first

evening in the Tetrarch's Palace at Jerusalem. I was soon encouraged by outward circumstance.

L. The woman appointed to wait on me, by name Joanna, came into my room to ask my choice for supper, and found me seated among a litter of the documents sent me by the priests. As we were gathering them up, I let fall a remark on their worthlessness, and on the folly of the Enquiry which they recorded. The woman made bold to tell me that she herself had given evidence before Councillors of the Sanhedrin, though her name and her testimony were excluded from the papers submitted to me for examination. In the course of some speech I had with her I extracted many particulars, probably unreliable, about the teachings of the dead man, and about the movements of his followers since his execution. I also extracted from her something more important, a promise that she would put me into touch with one at least of those followers who knew far more about the matter than herself. That promise was fulfilled, two days later, though, in order to profit by it, I had to escape from many embarrassments of escort and so-called collaborators-in-research, and make my way deviously to a little-known quarter of the city.

The man may be kin to Joanna, since his name is John. He is young. He speaks Greek after a fashion, having learnt it, as do many Galilaians, in one of the cities of the Dekapolis. He has some tincture of learning: in many towns and villages of Galilaia the Jewish priests called Pharisees have planted schools beside their synagogues. He is by nature intelligent, and eager to take opportunities of training and improving his intelligence. He is, in short, no contemptible witness of what has occurred.

M. I will set down in order the things of importance in his testimony.

(a) That he and another, older man arrived at the sepulchre

very early, on the heels of sun-rise, just before what he called the ending of the Fourth Watch. Reference to the written evidence of the Guards shows that they speak of themselves as having been driven away some space after the beginning of that Watch. This leaves only an interval of two to three hours, far too short a space for the elaborate deception and re-arrangement of my first alternative.

(b) That he and his friend had exactly the same experience as myself on first entering the sepulchre. They were immediately struck with what they saw, what (he insisted) no man could have expected to see, the grave-clothes and kerchief lying exactly as they had been folded round the body. He used the strange phrase, "I saw, and believed". Having seen the same things, I did not find it strange.

(c) That he and many others have since seen the phantom, both in Jerusalem and far off in Galilaia.

I must add that he obstinately though courteously rejected and refused the word 'phantom'. He spoke of his dead teacher as in all ways alive (though freed from the bondage of space and measurement), as talking, eating, offering his limbs for touch, and, on one occasion, specifically denying that he was in any sense a ghost. This seemed to me the least trustworthy portion of his testimony, yet I could not shake it by any cross-questioning, any attempt to trap him into discrepancies of time and place.

N. I naturally asked him for his own explanation of the matter, for what little it might be worth. He seemed at first inclined to give it to me, but then grew doubtful and more hesitant. I noticed that he watched my face closely as he spoke. At last he said "Another time. We must meet again. When you, and others, are more ready to believe."

I could make little of that, and disliked the little. I told

him something of my training and knowledge, of my reputation and of the dignity of our Academy. He seemed to grow more distant, and more impatient to put an end to our meeting, telling me of dangers that I was running by speaking with him. He is, of course, one of the men whose leader had been seized for crucifixion, and they themselves awaited arrest and persecution by such priests as had already encumbered my own search for truth. I soon desisted, complying with his whim. On reflection, I ask myself why I did not do so at once, losing little by leaving him without hearing whatever fantastic explanation occupied his untrained mind. But the boy had charm, as well as intelligence. The former had possibly persuaded me to overrate the latter.

O. I had naturally supposed that this John's ~~call~~ of my running into danger cloked (though he seemed no coward) his own fears of my bringing him into jeopardy by my visit. I soon found that there was substance in this. I was apparently followed on my journey to the poor quarters though I saw nothing at the time. When occupied with important speculations, I became less observant of things around me. I returned to the Tetrarch's Palace with even weightier matters to ponder and even fewer precautions against the many enemies of Truth. It must have been the spy of one such enemy who followed me through the streets.

P. I was not slow to discover the extent and malignity of their opposition. I will not prolong this report by an account of the mounting inconveniences, obstacles and even threats of violence which I began to encounter. I have written some part of all this in a letter I addressed to our beloved Rector, describing events in my most checkered return-journey from the dangers of Jerusalem to the welcome security of our Academy's walls. Here I am only concerned to record, for kindred spirits and fellow-seekers, the main course of my own search after Enlightenment—not the efforts made by

the powers of darkness to obliterate a Light which it can never understand.

Q. I have much to ponder, and I shall no doubt be able soon to write a second report, giving a better-considered synopsis of my unusual experiences and a more fruitful analysis of their philosophical implications. Such a task is clearly of overriding importance, and I must repeat my request to be left as free as possible to accomplish it, without being bothered to continue my course of lectures on the Absolute. May I suggest that our highly-esteemed colleague, Philodemos, should take over from me the four recently-arrived pupils from Cyprus, provisionally assigned to my care, and that our equally respected friend Moschos should deliver in any place the second course of lectures I recently planned on the Ultimate Errors of Stoicism? I have strangely lost interest in the Absolute and the Ultimate. I am now finding far more food for thought in the Particular and the Immediate—in certain folds of linen lying on a rocky shelf.

R. I have no other recommendations to add (apart from that already adumbrated, on the subject of the fish provided for our supper), unless it be one which may or may not secure the approval of the Faculty. If the Tetrarch Herod can be persuaded to implement his promises, and if some part of the revenues which would thereby accrue to the Academy can be expended in attracting pupils from his Tetrarchy of Galilaia, I submit, in all humility, that a formal invitation might be issued to the above-mentioned Galilaian, John, in the hope that he may feel impelled to come to us among the first of such pupils. I feel sure that we could dispel many of the illusions which appear to hamper his present search for Light, and possibly train him in a wiser and more fruitful appreciation of the philosophy of Greece than any which he can derive from the hucksters of the Dekapolis or the fishermen of the Lake.

The suggestion is made with considerable hesitancy. Without any such hesitancy I can conclude with the warmest protestations of love and loyalty to our Academy, and with hopes of friendly and fruitful co-operation in our future labours.

Farewell.

LXVII

PRIVATE LETTER. DATED FROM TIBERIAS OF GALILEE. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA TO THE RABBI NICODEMUS.

I REPLIED to your last letter, my dear Councillor and friend, with a brevity and by a phrase which I took from you. I have heard its three words more than once, here in Galilee. I have heard and seen much else, which compels me to believe them. He is risen.

Your second letter found me here. or rather near-by, at Capernaum. I had already decided to do, and begun to do, what you counselled. I cannot tell how far I was moved to come hither by the mood which prompted my first letter to you—my officious desire to seek out simple and unlearned Galileans and persuade them out of their errors. If it was so, then God used this strange way of sending me here that I might learn the truth from men simpler and better than myself.

I am no Doctor or Scribe. I was taught to write letters by my father (who was also a merchant) and, first, to answer all questions in the letters written to me.

One things needs no answer. There can be no question of discourtesy between you and me, no question of offence taken at harsh-seeming words.

Though I came here before you bade me, you have not

poured water on dry desert sand. I am grateful for all you have written, even if much of it only strengthened the growth of seeds already alive and stirring in my own heart.

Saying that, I do not say that I agree with all you have written. God makes no two men alike, no two minds of the same stuff and shape. The voice of mankind, uplifted in worship or in blasphemy, makes often a harmony, but never unison. We fit in with each other because we are all of different pattern (my jagged points into your gaps), not because we are all of monotonous symmetry, fitting like the little squares of mosaic with which the Romans lay their floors. Let us praise God for our variousness, and, in small matters, agree to disagree.

I shall not mind if you laugh at me for one disagreement. You have spent your life among books and doctrines and ideas. I have spent mine handling stuffs and timbers and metal-work, and listening to the truth or the lies that other merchants tell me about their smoothness, their workmanship, their chance of surviving rough usage, heat and cold and damp, or the slower inroads of mere time. I find God in such things, and learn, I trust, something about His ways and His purposes—secrets that can not always be put into words, but yet guide men who study them, by their silent witness to His handiwork. By such means the prophet Daniel detected the tricks of the Babylonitish priests and confuted the false witness of the lecherous elders against Susanna. By such means, from time to time, men trace the truth which brings a thief or a murderer to the punishment he has merited. By such means we may get nearer to greater truths, even by listening to what a pagan Greek philosopher tells us he has found in an untenanted sepulchre. I would not treat his trained questionings and probings with such scorn as yours. If ever his findings are made known, I shall listen, and may learn a little. God can reveal Himself in strange ways, through strange messengers.

I have learnt much here, in quite different fashions. I hope

to speak to you about it, coming back to Jerusalem before I start out upon my journeyings.

I still purpose to journey, at least as far as Rome. From rumours which reach us, even in Galilee, I believe it will soon be easier and more lawful for children of Israel to be seen openly in Rome when a certain 'tyranny' is 'over-past'.

I may go farther. A rich publican, here in Tiberias, sent me a letter by his slave. The man was bought in Gaul, but now speaks Latin. He comes from beyond Gaul, having been wrecked and captured on its northern shores, ten years ago. He is a Briton, and I talked with him of his own country for a short space, before I sent him back to his master with my answers. I did not understand all he told me. I would like to know more of that country, before the Romans enter, to conquer and make it like all the other lands that they enslave.

You will not suspect that I leave my own land in fear of what the Romans may soon be doing here, driven by their own cruelty or goaded by the restless rebelliousness of our Jewish countrymen. I know that you, and many others, expect the swift coming of bloodshed and disaster. But what many expect often fails to happen. Our present enslavement ensures a kind of peace, and that peace may last another twenty, or forty, years.

Certainly our rulers give us little to admire, much matter for scorn, or should it be pity? When you write of the darkness among them, I wonder that you, Rabbi, do not quote a saying which my father once heard from the Rabbi Shemaiah, and ever after treasured and repeated to me and my brother: "Love work. Avoid power. Keep away from those who govern."

I have so kept away, content with barter and hard work in my counting-house. There is filth in trade, but it does not stink as does the filth in government.

My father and my brother are at peace. Both laid their bones afar. As for her whom I loved and had for wife (for a brief space of months), she was buried in the Piræus of

Athens, where once I had great trade. ~~This~~ may be God's will for me and mine. I did not see this when I ordered a sepulchre for myself outside the walls of Jerusalem. I see it more clearly, now that God has found other use for the tomb which was there carved from rock.

It is of that tomb I should be writing, after protesting that I would answer what you wrote. Instead, I wander down paths of my own choosing. I fear that I grow old indeed.

I have surely *grown* since last we met. The pace of all things quickens round us, and many men in short time add cubits to their stature. My friends here in Galilee assure me that the end of all things is at hand—not brought upon our land by the legions of Rome, but upon all lands by the countless legions of God's angels. I cannot tell whether or no they are *right*. I only remember that their Teacher spoke, more than once, about the great last day which will come as a thief in the night. He said that no man will know beforehand of its coming. How can these men in Galilee tell whether it will be in ten days, or in ten thousand years?

You see that I still hesitate, and twist away from the forthright path of answering all you wrote. Suffer me to do so. Let me end now, not because I have no more to say, but because I have too much. Perhaps I had best keep the great things till we meet and can speak face to face: I must return to Jerusalem before I set out on my journey.

Perhaps I will write again, as you wrote to me in two letters, reserving your weightiest thoughts for the second. I would be following my father's counsel if I answered you in the same manner as you wrote!

I would say farewell upon that jest, but for one matter that needs mention.

When you and I took down a dead body from the Roman cross, we untwisted from the brows a long branch of thorn bush which the mocking soldiers had woven into a crown. You took it back to your home. May I ask for it from you? I would be glad to take it with me on my journey, as a keep-

sake and memorial of what happened in the Prætorium of Jerusalem. You, living out your life at Jerusalem, will have other keepsakes and will not grudge me this.

Await my coming in the next two weeks. Or await a second letter, which I may or may not send ahead. Cherish our friendship. May the God of Israel bless us both.

Farewell.

POSTSCRIPT

I HAVE called this book **THE DARKNESS**. Its purpose is to sketch in, for modern readers, the negative background of a picture whose positive outline was sufficiently traced, once and for all, by the writers of the four Gospels. To use the Biblical image, I have tried to suggest a pattern for that Darkness against which the Light suddenly shone, two thousand years ago.

I believe that the historical events involved were far more important than any others in the whole course of human evolution. I believe that, during the last century, they have constantly been presented to the ordinary reader in an unscientific and unscholarly fashion, being either misunderstood through ignorance or mis-interpreted to serve private, party or sectarian ends. This lamentable process is one among several which have helped to undermine the structure of modern civilisation, and now threaten to plunge us and our children into a future of unrelieved darkness.

No theologian, and certainly no historian, can add anything of essential value to the plain narrative of the Gospels, except by way of explanation and clarification. Modern attempts to do more have often been welcomed with loud applause, but are always quickly forgotten. But, meanwhile, Science and the improved technique of Historical Research have enabled us to achieve the humbler and more useful task of giving the story a factual setting which makes it more intelligible and more acceptable to the modern mind.

I have attempted some small part of this task. I have made all possible use of my own experiences in historical research, in the study of scientific psychology and in personal contact with the machinery of modern government—so reassuringly different in appearance, but in essence so terrifyingly similar to the governmental methods of the Borgias and Robespierres,

the Herods and Pilates of the Past. I hope the result of my labours will not shock or offend too many believers of a more old-fashioned outlook than my own, and that it may persuade a few other readers, who have hitherto found belief impossible, to accept as plain fact what may have seemed to them mere legend.

I am myself convinced that the earliest Christians were eager to emphasise the factual basis of their faith, and prevent it becoming (as Victorian reverence for Reverence tended to make it) a kind of abstract Vision in the Void. The Gospel-writers, and particularly St. Luke, are careful to give a detailed dating of their story, linking it up, so far as the contemporary confusion of Calendars permitted, with the political and administrative chronology of the period.

One such date remains curiously embedded in the Creed. This brief statement of doctrine contains a wholly undoc-trinal clause, 'suffered under Pontius Pilate', whose only aim could have been the rough fixing of the time of the Crucifixion—similar to our legal datings by the names of reigning sovereigns. This, incidentally, goes far to establish the presumption that the Creed is of very early origin. Forty years later, after the destruction of Jerusalem and the abolition of the Palestinian Procuratorship, nobody would have thought of using such a method of registering past time.

I have ventured to take a rather wide latitude in the matter of translating Greek, Latin and Hebrew idioms into modern ones, believing that a 'free' rendering will often reproduce an ancient or a foreign writer's meaning far more closely than a literal one. The art of Translation, like many other things, should surely be governed by St. Paul's principle, 'The Letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life'. I need make no apology for substituting such modern titles as 'Highness', 'Excellency' and 'Reverence' for their even more cumbersome First Century equivalents. But I have been bolder in my attempts to convey the meaning behind many other official or conversational phrases.

